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Issue 7.1 (Spring 2018) — Marxism and Cultural Studies

Editors' Introduction: Marxism and Cultural Studies — Stefanie A Jones, Eero Laine and Chris Alen Sula

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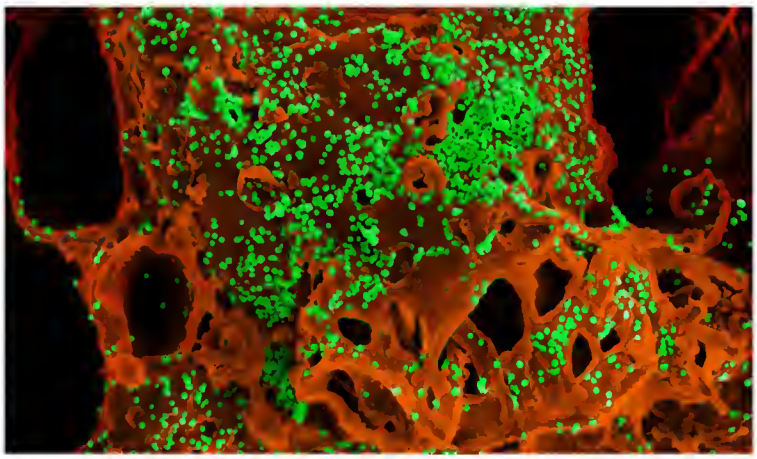
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Media and Culture in the US Jewish Labor Movement: Sweating for Democracy in the Interwar Era by Brian Dolber (Palgrave Macmillan)
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In the Wake: On Blackness and Being by Christina Sharpe (Duke University Press)
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Global Entertainment Media: A Critical Introduction by Lee Artz (Blackwell)
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Football and Manliness: An Unauthorized Feminist Account of the NFL by Thomas P. Oates (University of Illinois Press)
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Radical Gotham: Anarchism in New York City from Schwab's Saloon to Occupy Wall Street, edited by Tom Goyens (University of Illinois Press)
Reviewed by Sofia Cutler, January 2018

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Issue 7.1 (Spring 2018) — Marxism and Cultural Studies

Editors' Introduction: Marxism and Cultural Studies

Stefanie A Jones, Eero Laine and Chris Alen Sula

ABSTRACT Cultural studies as a discipline and intellectual practice is deeply indebted to Marx, even as the field of cultural studies has contested, revisited, and updated Marx's work. This issue points to a number of resonant threads currently active under the umbrella of cultural studies and opens possibilities for historical mapping of the many and varied aspects of marxist thought, in and out of the academy. The authors in this issue direct us toward and augment our understanding of the multi-faceted and inextricable links between questions of capital and questions of race, class, and gender power that have been the focus of US research in cultural studies especially within the past thirty years. In this issue, we continue and expand our editorial emphasis on the role of cultural studies in explaining and challenging the ongoing, intersectional significance of material power relations.

Cultural studies as a discipline and intellectual practice is deeply indebted to Marx, even as the field of cultural studies has contested, revisited, and updated Marx's work. The relationship between Marx, marxism, marxist thought, and cultural studies is richly defined through decades of scholarship, such that, though the discipline did not exist when Marx was writing, it is difficult to imagine cultural studies without Marx. Given how intertwined cultural studies is with Marx more than 150 years after the publication of *Das Kapital*, what shape does marxist cultural studies scholarship take today? This issue points to a number of resonant threads currently active under the umbrella of cultural studies and opens possibilities for historical mapping of the many and varied aspects of marxist thought, in and out of the academy.

This issue, as the CFP for it imagined, points to vital threads for further engagement. Black Marxism, Marxist Feminism, Transnational Marxisms, and transnational Marxist movements, (all intersectionally-conceived), are vibrant arenas of thought in their own right which cultural studies sidelines at its own peril. While Marx has been central to the academic discipline (such as it is) of cultural studies, this field moves through and beyond Marx's engagement with the world, dialectically expanding on and with Marx's work. The authors in this issue direct us toward and augment our understanding of the multi-faceted and inextricable links between questions of capital and questions of race, class, and gender power that have been the focus of US research in cultural studies especially within the past thirty years. In this issue, we continue and expand our editorial emphasis on the role of cultural studies in explaining and challenging the ongoing, intersectional significance of material power relations.

A special issue on a topic as large as Marx and cultural studies will necessarily be incomplete. Such a collection can only capture pieces of the deluge of intellectual and political work on and with Marx that has played such a key role in understanding and

changing our relations with capital, capitalism, and capitalists. As Marx's work is often either sanctified or vilified, the task of responding to such a vision—Marx and cultural studies—is a daunting one. The authors in this issue have thus valiantly put forward varied and at times contesting notions of how Marx might be deployed, engaged, and questioned within a cultural studies framework. This special issue, then, points to future directions that cultural studies (and by extension, *Lateral*) might continue to engage. Alongside and informed by the work of these contributors, this special issue marks a call for further inquiry, deeper engagement, and expanded research. We welcome contributions continuing this project.

Our lead article, Leigh Claire La Berge's "Decommodified Labor: Conceptualizing Work after the Wage," reconsiders immaterial labor and waged work in light of a number of contemporary trends in commerce and the workforce. The article questions some of the historical and critical assumptions about the ways that labor is defined and redefined. In taking this up, La Berge's article offers us new ways of thinking through the unwaged labor that increasingly occupies our time and efforts.

Working in parallel to wages, Liane Tanguay presents a cogent critique of debt in "Imagined Immunities: Abjection, Contagion and the Neoliberal Debt Economy." The article neatly overlaps Marxian economics, social theories of debt, and medical discourses of immunity and contagion in its consideration of neoliberal capital. Such discourse is deployed through examples of biohorror in contemporary media as well as the affective and actual crises that permeate contemporary life.

John McMahon engages Marx through an affective lens in "Vital Forces: Marx and the Tension of Capitalist Affect." His article examines the historical precedent for such an approach with a novel reading of Marx with and against Spinoza and Deleuze. The work offers an important critique of capitalist affect and asks what affective responses might be available for communal purposes while returning to Marx's central work.

In "Marxism, Cultural Studies, and the 'Principle of Historical Specification': On the Form of Historical Time in Conjunctural Analysis," Douglas Spielman engages the field of cultural studies and its historiographic assumptions. The article reconsiders the notion of conjuncture as a way of moving past linear and progressive notions of time. Engaging Marx, Althusser, Grossberg, and others, Spielman argues for multiplicities of time that open, rather, than foreclose, cultural analysis.

Heath Schultz's article, "Debord in Watts: Race and Class Antagonisms Under Spectacle," works historically and theoretically–returning to the Watts uprising in 1965 and the insights of Afropessimism to illuminate and move beyond Guy Debord's race and class politics in *Society of the Spectacle*. Schultz discusses how the spectacle requires blackness to represent poverty as well as to be policed into poverty; through this Schultz elucidates Debord's understanding of the Watts rebels as revolutionary subjects, struggling to counter the alienation of life under spectacle. Working with Afropessimist thinkers to demonstrate the limits of Debord's politics around capitalism's foundational antiblackness, Schultz returns us to the riot as a means of breaking out of the spectacle's dependence on communication and on our very selves.

Taking on the persistent matter of Marx and rights, Martin Moorby revisits key texts by Marx and Steven Lukes in his article, "'[W]ho is this man who is distinct from this citizen?' Revisiting Marx's Critique of Liberal Rights." Moorby provides us with a spirited review of the arguments surrounding Marx and liberal rights, while arguing, via Marx, for a nuanced understanding of rights that stems from careful historicization.

Also in this issue is "The Best of All Possible Ends of the World: An Interview with Andrew Culp." Josef Thorne interviews Culp, author of *Dark Deleuze*. Culp begins with an anarchist perspective on the recent history and practice of social movements, and discusses how Deleuze has been used to interject liberalism into Marxism, and engages with recent scholarship by thinkers including Isabelle Stenger and Manuel DeLanda. The interview also resonates with themes present in Schultz's article; when read together the two pieces point towards Afropessimism's past and future role in thinking questions of capital and cultural studies.

Finally, we are pleased to publish the 2017 winner of the Randy Martin Prize. The prize is awarded each year at the Cultural Studies Association to the graduate student with the best paper presentation. We congratulate Elizabeth Verklan for the article "Doing What You Love in the Age of Mass Debt," which is published here. Shedding light on the subject of what LaBerge calls "decommodified labor," Verklan dissects the neoliberal notion of doing what one loves through the particular figure of the fashion intern. Often unpaid and working in a field of uncertain value, the fashion intern comes to stand in as an idealized worker in neoliberal markets. Verklan's prize-winning article resonates here amongst the other articles in this issue with its attention to labor and shifting modes of production under late capitalism.

Bio



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Issue 7.1 (Spring 2018) — Marxism and Cultural Studies

Decommodified Labor: Conceptualizing Work After the Wage

Leigh Claire La Berge

ABSTRACT A way to think labor after finanancialization, decommodifed labor refers to an emptying out of the same wage relation that nonetheless continues to structure our lives. "Working hard or hardly working" needs a new conjunction: in an age of decommodifed labor, one finds oneself working hard and hardly working. I suggest that decommodified labor offers cultural critics a form for isolating labor today that takes account of its relation to the wage, that may assist in periodizing the capital-labor relation, and that also highlights financial change alongside labor's durational necessity under capitalism.

"Payment is on an unpaid basis."—job posting[1]

How do we think labor in our economic present? In an age of financialization, under the organization of what many commentators have explained as a FIRE (finance, insurance, real estate) economy, what are our metrics for, and what are our theoretical orientations of, conceptualizing labor? The past few years have seen the question of labor's contemporaneity appear in popular and theoretical discourse, presaging both its return from a biopolitics-based exile as well as its predicted eclipse by novel economic prognostications. We have witnessed new terms emerge, including, most prominently, "immaterial labor" as well as "affective labor." Fredric Jameson has suggested that we reread *Capital Volume 1* as a "theory of unemployment"—certainly an argument for rethinking the metrics of labor.[2] Yet historians have wondered whether we have witnessed "the rise and fall of the job" or whether many of us will live a "wageless life."[3] To these academic discussions about labor's scope and breadth, we should add popular publications such as *The Wall Street Journal,* which has not so subtly declared, "The End of Employees," and *Forbes* which wondered: "Unpaid Jobs: The New Normal?"[4]

On the occasion of this special—and necessary—issue of *Lateral* on rethinking Marxism, I would like to suggest a return to the question of labor and a certain configuration of labor in particular: what I call *decommodified labor*. A way to think labor that becomes available after finanancialization, *decommodifed labor* refers to an emptying out of the same wage relation that nonetheless continues to structure our lives. "Working hard or hardly working" needs a new conjunction: in an age of decommodifed labor, one finds oneself working hard *and* hardly working. I suggest that decommodified labor offers cultural critics a concept for isolating labor today that takes account of its relation to the wage, that may assist in periodizing our current capital-labor relation, and that highlights financial change alongside labor's durational necessity under capitalism.

Whether we classify it or not, we encounter decommodified labor daily. Reality television, for example, runs on decommodified labor: those "real" people we see on television forgo

a wage in exchange for "exposure."[5] It was recently reported that the corporate-hipster company Urban Outfitters asked its employees to "volunteer" for six-hour holiday shifts. Such volunteerism would be like work, but without the wage.[6] In the popular HBO series *Girls*, one character notes to another that he has taken "a new job as an assistant to a curator of dance. It's unpaid, but it could lead somewhere."[7] Whether in cultural production, cultural consumption or in the content of various cultural texts, decommodified labor limns our present. We see further examples of decommodified labor in professional sports, civic maintenance, and throughout secondary education and the academy.

As with any "aesthetic-economical-historical"—which is to say, cultural—concept, decommodified labor is indexible but not reducible to an empirical reality.[8] We have multiple and discrete data points to guide us. First, there has essentially been no real increase in real wages in the United States since 1970.[9] We know from decades of sociological research that employment has become more service-oriented, low-wage and precarious; the most common job in the United States today is that of cashier.[10] But at another level, bad work becomes no work. Thus we can further qualify not what but whether employment is generated in such a scene. The economic historian Aaron Benanav notes that in "high income countries [by] 2010 more than 1 in 6 workers, and 1 in 4 young workers, counted as surplus to labor demands."[11] And yet a concept cannot be produced through such data alone; facts must be distilled within a historical scheme in which their importance as fact and the hierarchical terrain in which empiricism might cede into abstraction may be organized and revealed.

To approach the emergence of the changes that render decommodified labor visible today is to return to the 1970s. It was then that a coordinated national and international effort led by the United States began to halt wage growth and offer, in its place, ever-expanding forms of ever-cheaper consumer credit. We now have a palate of debt-forms: medical debt, student debt, car debt, mortgages, and credit-card debt. Basic and necessary to social reproduction, often securitized and a now-staple of our financial system, such debt-forms emerge from the ashes of the Keynesian compact. In the United States, that compact insured that organized labor would get more of a share of social wealth in exchange for a less radical labor politics; that the US dollar would serve as the benchmark for international exchange and would be fixed to gold. The reasons for its demise are many and, for us, less important: as Keynes himself famously said of economic durability, "in the long run, we are all dead."[12] In the short run, however, the 1970s would produce shifts in how work was represented, critiqued, and experienced. Union membership began its long decline. The economy began its first post-war stagnation, now reconceived as "stagflation." Faced with the fall out from high inflation and high unemployment, Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker foresaw a new path: the Federal Reserve would seek to "break unions and empty factories."[13] The United States then embraced a finance-led regime whose history is now written in asset bubbles and their denouement: the dot.com bubble, the housing bubble, and as I write in spring, 2018, a new equities bubble seems to be emerging. My concern in this article, however, is with how labor adjusts to such a scheme.

Given this recent history, it is no wonder that scholars have turned to the questions of how to capture conceptually the manner in which people work under such conditions. *Immaterial? Redundant? Cognitive? Digital? Affective?* We have many terms from which to draw. I will understand *work* as a local action in which we all engage to make our lives both meaningful and possible, and *labor* as a coordinated social abstraction through which our work is organized.[14] What I mean to capacitate with the term "decommodified labor" is a kind of work that is not compensated through a wage or available through a market

purchase. Nor does decommodified labor primarily derive from or circulate through the intimate settings of family, care, and love, a kind of work increasingly recognized as "affective labor." It likewise bears little relation to the rather odd term "immaterial labor."[15]

In this article, then, I want to make two claims. I want to suggest that decommodified labor provides both a terminology and methodology for thinking labor in our current conjuncture. Decommodified labor as I present it here seeks to account for increased wagelessness and patterns of economic stagnation after financialization, even as, once identified, it may be located throughout capitalist history. It is a term that articulates a present-ness of labor without making a claim of labor's structural change. Rather, my argument for a decommodified labor follows my understanding that there is no new labor in capitalism.[16] Labor has not become more or less *affective,* more or less *material*, more or less *cognitive*. We must see these concepts as moments of attempted periodization that, like periodization based on technological change, are staged at the wrong level of mediation. But labor may be more or less commodified, much as the organic composition of capital can and will change.[17] I will argue that sites of labor must be transhistorical within a capitalist frame. A certain type of labor should be able to be located in multiple moments of capitalist history.

I proceed by exploring the history of decommodification as a potentially suitable concept for a Marxist political economy; I then suggest that "decommodified labor" in particular might help us to clarify how a certain form of labor becomes dominant in an era of real subsumption. Thus, I attempt to draw out a methodology for labor periodization. Finally, I offer a catalogue of locations where we find decommodified labor today—from the culture industry to academic peer review—as well as related but distinct sites of value extraction and compensation, from prison work to government disability payments, that might help us further delimit decommodified labor.

From Decommodifcation to Decommodified Labor

The larger concept of decommodification has been developed almost exclusively in political science and legal studies where it designates a certain independence from market forces. That independence, on a whole, is understood as a salve from whatever particular injuries an actor, or asset, might face were it to remain in the market. Karl Polanyi introduced the term to limn his famous double movement of capitalism under a process he described as the "embedding" and "disembedding" of market relations.[18] If commodification denotes the sale of an object or process on the market, then decommodification implies the circumscription of that sale.[19] Polanyi's critique is staged at the level of the social and historical, but we may also see this duality at the scale of the individual.

It was Gösta Epsing-Anderson, however, whose book *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* inaugurated the term in its current critical capacity with the claim that "the concept [of decommodification] refers to the degree to which individuals, or families, can uphold a socially acceptable living independent of market participation."[20] The "three worlds" of welfare capitalism outline the actual degree to which this independence is possible in capitalist democracies. Scandinavian countries circumscribe market forces in the provision of healthcare, education and housing most forcefully, thus their version of decommodification offers the most protection to their citizens from the caprices and deprivations of the market. The Anglo-sphere of England, Canada, Australia and New Zealand somewhat circumscribe the commodification of these provisions but offer a lesser degree of protection. And the United States permits the highest degree of commodification of basic services and thus its social sphere ensures the highest degree of

precarity for those living in it. Epsing-Anderson, then, has developed the term as a concept appropriate to understand the freedoms and possibilities of labor within capitalist welfare states. He presents the decommodification of labor as the situation in which "a service is rendered as a matter of right, and when a person can maintain a livelihood without reliance on the market."[21]

Following Epsing-Anderson, Peter Frase has likewise explored the concept, noting its limits. He writes that "so long as the society remains a capitalist one, it is never possible for labor to be *totally* de-commodified, for in that circumstance there would be nothing to compel workers to go take a job working for someone else, and capital accumulation would grind to a halt."[22] Frase's comment highlights the term's limited scope: one who uses the term, decommodificaiton, is in a sense noting that it in no way seeks to deliver us from a regime of commodification; rather, it is a limited response to that regime. Thus while introducing the basic concept of decommodification, these theorizations have the additional force of underscoring that commodification is the most fundamental physical, social and imaginative infrastructure of our present. Decommodification presumes commodification it does not presage it.

Decommodification, then, carries more modest ambitions than communization precisely because it recognizes the intransigence of commodification. But the term's limitations may help to distinguish it from other associated terms such as the practice of "commoning" or the space of "the commons." Once in a commons, uncompensated labor would no longer be decommodifed—because the scene of commodification itself would not exist; there would be no labor but rather, as Marx calls, "really free working."[23] But there is another worry about the scope of the term "the commons": it carries with it a spatial designation. The commons is (was) a place. Labor claims a duration; "what the worker sells is time," Harry Braverman reminds us.[24] We would not say that during Occupy Wall Street, Zuccotti Park was decommodified; we would say it was commoned. Conversely, Bruce Carruthers suggests that in the wake of the 2007–2008 credit crisis, the federal government "decommodified" many securities. This decommodification preserved their value but halted their circulation until the market could bear their exchange at stable prices.[25]

While I note these explorations and uses of the idea of decommodification, my term "decommodified labor" departs from Epsing-Anderson in some significant fashion. Indeed, I invert his usage. For Epsing-Andersen, decommodification puts a limit on capitalist organization and its intensification as those processes transpire through commodification —the selling of an object made by wage labor on a market. In protecting certain forms of social need—housing, medicine, education—from commodity markets, sellers of labor power, i.e., all of us, are a bit more free in the choices we can and must make to socially reproduce ourselves. As I will use the term, however, *decommodified labor* suggests an intensification of the possibility of extraction from the labor relation.[26] Such intensification happens outside of the wage-labor market because *there is no wage*. Yet conversely, the process is still within the wage-labor market: we are still witnessing the ability of capital to extract surplus value from a situation of what we recognize as formal labor—going to work, clocking in, having a boss, and so on. With the term *decommodified labor*, I want to suggest a new configuration of value-extraction, in which the wage is diminished but the formal organization of work, its rhythms, commitments, and narratives remain. Scholars of liberalism, such as Frase and Epsing-Anderson, would suggest decommodification's positive valence; I am not interested in making an ethical claim but rather a historical one. Like commodified labor, decommodified labor provides both freedoms and constraints.

Examples of decommodified labor abound, but perhaps readers of *Lateral* will appreciate one from the academy—itself a leader in such job production. Southern Illinois University recently announced a new kind of position, what the university called a "volunteer adjunct."[27] In this scheme, recently minted PhDs could apply to work within the university from which they had just graduated; the position was for alumni. Once hired, they would undertake such tasks as graduate advising, committee work, and teaching; the position was part of the University's Graduate Faculty. The positions would span three years, after which renewal would be possible. So one gets credentialed, one applies, one undertakes directed tasks for a bounded time period, one can then apply for renewal to extend that duration. This is a description of formal, highly skilled employment. But, importantly, this position carries no remuneration. Thus, the position is referred to by the university as "zero-time (adjunct) status," since time and wage are coordinated and here, as the wage is zero, the time becomes zero.

How shall we categorize this type of employment? Is the labor performed in this position cognitive? Absolutely. Is it affective? How could it not be? Just imagine the production of feeling states as one returns to work without pay and shepherds other graduate students into a similarly, if not yet comprehended, unpaid future. Thus there is a subjective element as well: to undertake decommodified labor is always to be trained in being a decommodified laborer. Is it immaterial? Yes, but it is no doubt material, too. Let us think of the defining characteristic in this example. Certainly, it is the coincidence of formality and professionalism without remuneration. The labor maintains its commodity form and is exchanged without being sold. This situation renders labor decommodified. Let that be our example *par excellence* as we move forward.

Immediately, in its very terminology, "decommodified labor" may appear tautological. "Labor," as opposed to work, already *is* a commodity; labor implies the incorporation of labor-power into capitalism. Why wouldn't "decommodified labor" simply be labor power, that with which humans are endowed, before it is sold? Why route labor power through a commodity chain, only to then claim an exception to that chain? The answer to such questions is that with decommodified labor the commodity chain is still in place as are the presumptions of wage labor and the infrastructure of associated benefits and losses, but the wage itself is deemed incommensurate with the work. We see as much in the preceding example.

In the specific case of decommodified labor, the status of the commodity is preserved, but its circulation is halted and its possibility for its exchange is foreclosed. The duration of that foreclosure varies, as does its object. Sometimes the appearance of decommodified labor may be periodized historically by population. Child labor, for example, has been decommodified in most capitalist democracies for some time. It was for centuries an important source of both waged and unwaged labor. In the United States, since 1938, it has been illegal, and now very few children in the United States are workers.[28] Yet children still possess the ability to be laborers. Were restrictions on child labor lifted tomorrow, we would again have child workers.[29] Capitalist history is filled with examples of work-like actions as they drift in and out of commodified states. People themselves also drift in and out of commodified states in their specific role as workers. Actions may become commodified; they may likewise be decommodifed. Often when that happens, however, we cease to consider the task work; likewise, we cease calling those undertaking the task workers.[30] Decommodified labor forces us to do otherwise.

These three brief examples that I have offered to introduce the concept show something of the breadth and diversity of both decommodification and its specificity when applied to labor. In the example of the securities, their decommodification interrupted their ability to circulate as a commodity in order to preserve their value and allow them to be

reintroduced into a market at some future point. With the decommodification of children's labor, a population's ability to labor was suspended with the knowledge that those who occupy that class of laborers would themselves be elongated into a future in which they would join the working world on new terms; the "teenager," a quasi-adult capable of working but not voting, was a creation of this moment.[31] And, finally, with the "volunteer adjunct" position, because the employer knows that there is no present or future market for academic labor, the employer can make a claim on decommodified labor *now*: work for us for free today, as tomorrow even the chance to work for free might prove elusive. As such, if the concept of *class* were to be invoked, it would need to be understood as fleeting and transient; we simply cannot compare the emergence and recession of decommodified laborers to a process of proletarianization.[32]

Periodizing Decommodified Labor?

Following Jameson and Zizek, we now claim with some truth that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.[33] In the feudal era, of course, it was easier to imagine the end of the world than the beginning of capitalism. The substitution instructs us that as capitalism develops, it becomes history. When Marx declares that "all history is the history of class struggle" he makes an argument that *after* the arrival of capitalism, history itself cannot be imagined outside of its frame. This claim would be better said were it to distinguish narrative from history. All history is not the history of class struggle but capitalism's logic of ceaseless and unbounded accumulation produces a narrative in which those features supersede of the frame of capitalism itself. Capitalists are imperialists no less in their imagination than in their control of space.

To periodize capitalism, then, requires us to distinguish the accumulation and representation of time on multiple levels; history as time, capital as time, labor as time, narrative as time. Yet each term produces and represents a different dimension of temporality. History organizes time as either casual sequence or lateral movement; capital is the result of time socialized and appropriated; labor is time given forward and paid backward; narrative is time-based meaning, read forward and comprehended in reverse.[34]

As a mode of production, capitalism excels at producing narratives of critical change. Think of Walter Benjamin's wonderful comment that "there has never been an epoch . . . [that] did not believe itself to be standing directly before an abyss."[35] And yet, certain structural features of capitalism do not change. Capital extracts surplus value through the absorption and recreation of workers' time—that constant cannot and will not change. And workers must be given something in exchange for their time. Workers may work more or less; they may work in fields or factories; they may be unionized or not; they may capture a greater or lesser percentage of the total surplus; they may have expanded or contracted add-ons such as health insurance, retirement, and so on. As with the work itself, the manner in which workers are compensated for the basic appropriation will be historically specific. The question in attempting to periodize the capital/labor relationship becomes on what terms do we analyze that specificity?

We might see one model in how scholars have used technology to periodize labor. Let us take the example of "digital labor," as theorized by Christian Fuchs in an impressive body of scholarship.[36] Why do we need a theory of digital labor? Probably because few will deny that computerization, information technology in particular, has transformed the speed with which we communicate, produce and consume on a global scale. Fuchs suggests that his theory of digital labor explores, in part, the question: "where do computers, laptops and mobile phones come from and who produced them?"[37] He answers that "specific cases of digital labor . . . [include] the extraction of minerals in

African mines under slave-like conditions; ICT [information communication technology] manufacturing and assemblage in China (Foxconn); software engineering in India; call-centre service work in the Philippines," among others. How exactly do people work *digitally* across such broad swaths of geography and varying levels of capitalist development? What unites these diversities in order to constitute digital labor?

We know whatever substance is perceived as the essence of digital labor must exceed what media companies have come to call "content," that undifferentiated mass of commodified narratives and affects that we often ourselves produce; it must instead trespass upon, as Marx says of critique in an industrial age, "the door of production."[38] Fuchs clarifies that digital labor "therefore does not only denote the production of digital content. It is a category that rather encompasses the whole mode of digital production, a network of agricultural, industrial and informational labor that enables the existence and use of digital media."[39] Digital products require multiple sites and organizations of labor. And because digital production is so diverse, so must be its manner of compensation, or lack thereof. In a different article, but one that follows the global scope presented here, Fuchs notes that, "most digital relations of production are shaped by wage labor, slave labor, unpaid labor, precarious labor and freelance labor."[40] Examining a broad range of digital laborers, Fuchs concludes that they are interconnected as workers because "they are all alienated in the sense that they do not own the products they produce."[41]

What then ultimately distinguishes "digital labor?" Fuchs is hard pressed to say. How is it different from industrial labor? From agricultural labor? The manipulated objects are different, thus, the products produced are different. But it is unclear how that difference changes the basic form of labor itself. I would suggest digital labor is not a type of labor, but rather a manner of periodizing labor. I make a similar argument about affective labor in my forthcoming book, *Wages Against Artwork: Socially Engaged Art and the Decommodification of Labor*.[42] To Fuchs's credit, and unlike much biopolitical discourse, digital labor does maintain certain crucial aspects of labor as theorized by Marx. Namely, that labor partakes in a form of unequal exchange during which some aspect of the worker's time will be appropriated as surplus value from the worker who will then need to compensate for that extraction by regenerating herself to be able to return to work. Yet to emphasize a historical break into a scene of digital (or immaterial labor or cognitive labor) is to proceed backwards, as it were. Assuming that there has been a change to labor's structure, such theories then locate a proximal, often technological, and usually experience-based qualification of labor. We live in an age of computing, therefore labor has become *digital*. We live in an age of service provisions, therefore labor has become *affective*. We live in an age of the separation of mental and manual labor, therefore labor has become *cognitive*. And so on.

The model for such claims follows the kind of segmentation found in the history of technology: the age of industry, the networked age, the space age, etc. The objects that are selected to bookend such histories are themselves often problematic, as David Edgarton has shown in his wonderfully titled book, *The Shock of the Old: Technology and Global History Since 1900*.[43] Why do we have "the space age" and not the "rickshaw age?" How did "the age of revolution" cede into "the age of industry?" We may locate other problems, too. Foremost, technology *is* labor. It is appropriated, socialized, and sedimented labor time—one aspect of "constant capital." Once that collection becomes "technology" it takes on worrisomely reifying characteristics of which the argument in Heidegger's essay, "The Question Concerning Technology," may be understood as a symptom. An understanding of technology as labor reveals one of the reasons that exacting a technology-based qualification of labor is so trying: there's a certain structural redundancy built in. Most simply, we must locate a level of abstraction other than

technology to ground our periodization. Indeed, we must ask which aspects of labor should be periodized.

Decommodified labor itself does not constitute a historically new phenomenon; it has been realized before and it now is again available in our contemporary moment. Yet while we are quite accustomed to an analysis of how a task or object becomes a commodity, we are less used to a critique of how things cease to be a commodity. Nonetheless, we do have a repertoire of cognate terms on which to draw. For example, *deskilling* designates the devaluation of a certain task, and since any skill takes time to acquire, deskilling is also a reorganization of a worker's time and life possibilities. And as critics like Harry Braverman have argued, skilling, deskilling and reskilling reveal a dialectic unto themselves; historically they emerge and recede with new technologies. "Deindustrialization" meanwhile marks the devaluation of a certain place and its built environment. Deindustrialization is often positioned as local to the 1970s, and places such as Detroit and Manchester loom large in its imaginaries, but in fact deindustrialization has been a recurrent feature of urban life since the eighteenth century.[44] Such inflation and deflation of skill and place form the basis for Marx's ratio-based theory of the organic composition of capital.[45] Yet we do not currently have a term for the state in which our formal labor is devalued to the point of wagelessness while we are still doing it and this process too ebbs and flows through capitalist modernity.

But why, then, does decommodified labor become available for analysis now? We can locate its contemporary conditions of possibility in two different, albeit contiguous theorizations of economic history: the International Political Economy tradition (IPE) as well as the *operaismo* tradition. First, it must be noted, which Epsing-Anderson and other liberal understandings of the decommodification of labor as a salve from the ravages of the market do not, that what Martijn Konings and Leo Panitch call the "financial-imperial" architecture of the post 1973-American economy has enabled the emergence of decommodified labor now.[46] The United States' unique role as global debtor of last resort combined with the US dollar's global reach—the ability for dollar-denominated assets to increase in value throughout the world without the dollar inflating in price—sets the stage for decommodified labor to appear as it allows economic growth and wealth-storage to be decoupled from wages. Panitch and Konings argue that "in contrast to what happened with Britain [after its loss of hegemony], America's ability to accumulate gigantic amounts of debt was not compromised by the fact that its debts to the world came to far exceed its assets. This was precisely because America's debts became a central element of the infrastructure of the international financial system."[47]

Secondly, we may suggest that decommodified labor may be understood as one experience of what scholars, primarily those influenced by Toni Negri, have called "real subsumption," following Marx's own "real subsumption of labor to capital." This construction captures a transformation of labor and is likewise traceable to theoretical flourishing in the 1970s as questions about the potential for class struggle and the limits of "the factory" emerged. Originally a concept Marx himself used to describe large-scale industrialization and mechanization, "real subsumption" has become somewhat of a metaphor for the ability of capitalism to progress, to intensify, to extract more and to encompass all. There is no "outside," here; capital has no other. Marx was more precise. He distinguishes formal and real subsumption as based on a move from relative to absolute surplus value. In a regime of absolute surplus value extraction, the working day can be extended to increase profit. But that increase has an end, obviously, and after its limit has been reached, a regime of relative surplus value extraction takes over. There, labor may be intensified through processes internal to capitalism.

For some interpreters, real subsumption is a historical category: first formal, then real. For others, it is a logical category: these two models of capitalist appropriation are always available and shift back and forth. I am partial to the latter claim. Regardless, with the real subsumption of labor to capital, value extraction is hardly limited to waged work or financial schemes, and the subjects who might transform our social structures far exceed those found in unions, syndicates and so on. Labor, the value-generating result of the sale of human labor power as a commodity, is understood through the interpretation of real subsumption to have expanded and to refer to a whole host of human activities outside of formal places of work. As Jason Read explains in his wonderful reading of Negri, "capital no longer simply exploits labor, understood as the physical capacity to transform objects, but puts to work the capacities to create and communicate that traverse social relations . . . with real subsumption . . . there is no relationship that cannot be transformed into a commodity."[48] Mario Tronti goes further: "the social character of production has been extended to the point that the entire society now functions as a mode of production."[49] And finally, of course, we note Silvia Federici, Leopoldina Fortunati, and Mariarosa Dalla Costa. Each of these theorists has argued not only that capital seeks recourse to the informality of wagelessness for its reproduction, but that its sites for doing so, i.e., the home, are foundational to capital's continuation.[50]

One the one hand, we can't stop working. All actions seem always-already incorporated into a scheme of surplus-value extraction. Theorizations of informal, home-based sites of reproduction as necessarily capitalized have been absolutely crucial in expanding our understanding of what it means to work. On the other hand, labor that is waged now appears in retreat. Formal labor has begun to adopt one of the chief characteristics of home-based work: its lack of remuneration. We can't stop working and we can't seem to get paid for the work that we do. And yet cultural critics have not yet developed a specification for the labor done in that moment. Hardt and Negri have rightly noted this contradiction: "This leads us to a paradox: in the same moment when theory no longer sees labor, labor has everywhere become the common substance. The theoretical emptying of the problem of labor corresponds to its maximum pregnancy as the substance of human action across the globe."[51]

Their claim is provocative, but its abstract character disallows certain forms of analysis. At the same time, their own work itself has moved increasingly toward similarly abstract concepts, as seen in their concept of "immaterial value" or of "the multitude," for example. Other scholars have sought to find more concrete sites at which this paradox of all-work/no-work appears. Jonathan Crary's *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* might be the example *par excellence* of labor's conceptual bleeding. He explores the same sleep humans have always slept, but now it has become surplus-value generating. Sleep has become the end-terrain of capital and state-craft. Pop an Ambien on the way in into it, anxiously dream of a collegial Facebook posting gone awry, wake up reaching for an iPhone, at 3:10 am.[52] This is certainly an example of something, but I'm not sure of what. Indeed, the vagueness of the relationship to labor indicates the problem.

If there is no relationship that cannot be transformed into a commodity, then we must add that there is no relationship that cannot be decommodified. Decommodified labor introduces the notion of an accumulative pause and retreat (for the worker, of course) that terms like spatial fix and uneven development seek to locate at a larger scale of analysis. Decommodified labor returns us to the discreteness and formality of bounded employment, now with the benefit of theorizations including Negri's and Federici's as a guide. It carves out of the porousness of real subsumption a new site of difference, and it reincorporates that difference into formal work to produce a kind of combined and uneven employment.

Combined and Uneven Employment: Locating Decommodified Labor Now

In addition to theorizing decommodified labor, to periodizing it, we must be able to locate it. Here we are not concerned with simple wagelessness. Rather we are concerned to identify the location of formal, value-generating work that is not waged. With decommodified labor: the work is still the work, the job is still the job, the rules still apply, but the wage has disappeared. Cuba still uses the phrase "volunteer labor" to refer to civic and community tasks that are encouraged and indeed necessary but nonetheless carried out beyond the limits of formal employment and compensation. In the United States, however, we have different idioms to choose from: volunteerism, community service, internship, even "research." Each resonates with, and indeed exemplifies, some crucial element of decommodified labor. Benanav rightly notes that "while it is easy to identify the middle or lower levels of the set of surplus workers, it much more difficult to identify its upper levels."[53] One reason for such difficulty, as George Caffentzis has suggested, is that "unwaged work [offers] the appearance of personal choice."[54]

We might delineate four discrete areas in which decommodified labor appears today: the culture industry, civic organization, internships, and education, including the academy. It is important to my argument that these identifications of decommodified labor are not organized around a technology. Indeed, we see varying degrees of the use of technology in the examples I will present, but none of them rely on technology for their definition. Likewise, none of them rely on "affect" as an over-determining feature. Of course each of them make use of forms of technology and affect—as does all labor; that is quite simply what it means for labor to be, in Marx's words, "uniquely human." These examples are not meant to be exhaustive. I hope to begin rather than end a conversation.

The Culture Industry

Inherited from the Frankfurt School, the conglomerate notion of "the culture industry" is indeed a capacious concept, ranging from professional sports to music, from art production to film and television, to now, of course, to the world of social media. What each of these specific cultural forms has in common is a structural underpinning of decommodifed labor; I will focus only on a few. Sometimes that underpinning is thematized in the cultural form itself: think of reality television, which both dramatizes and is produced by decommodified labor. The communications scholar Tanner Mirrlees notes that: "reality TV companies keep production costs to a minimum by exploiting the non-waged labour of anybody who want . . . to become a reality TV celebrity. For most of TV's history, TV studios hired and paid for the labor of professional actors, many of which were unionized . . . [lack of wages] decreases the number of paid jobs for TV."[55] Likewise, Mark Andrejevic has argued that such television essentially produces a site of spectral labor, what he calls "the work of being watched," in his book of the same name.[56] What I would add to this communications-based overview is that the viewing public enjoys watching unpaid people as they struggle to find remuneration after the wage because it mirrors their own experiences. Indeed, reality television—everyone working, no one really working—both resonates with and renders normative the decommodified working life of many.

Other times, however, the decommodified labor that subtends the cultural form is obfuscated by the cultural product. Think of professional sports, which very much is organized around an idea of globalized, fair capitalist competition with spectacular wealth as the hard-earned result of winning. The sports industry includes in its moneymaking model the non-remuneration of much of its labor force. Professional golf has led the way, with tennis, football, and basketball each following. In 2012, *Forbes* invoked an oddly

Marxist terminology in its article "The PGA Tour's Secret Army," in which a reporter spent several weeks as a Professional Golf Association (PGA) tournament volunteer, mostly parking cars and doing laundry. One of the most profitable sporting associations (like the NFL and USTA, it is also a non-profit—its own irony[57]), *Forbes* notes that golf's earnings come from "ticket sales, pro-am events and concessions, but the real financial secret sauce is free labor: Nearly everyone you see working at a PGA Tour event is a volunteer, many toiling long hours and seeing very little, if any, actual golf."[58] These volunteer activities are regulated. One has to purchase a uniform; show up on time; follow the rules and so on. What happens if one is late or missing one's uniform or watching golf instead of doing laundry? According to one professional tennis tournament—proudly run almost exclusively through volunteers—failure to follow the rules will result in "termination."[59] This, then, is a relationship of employer to employee.

Civic Work

In the mid-1970s, at the height of New York City's fiscal crisis, with hospitals slated to close, police officers and firefighters being laid off by the thousands, and no help forthcoming from the Federal Government, the city came up with a novel idea: get people to work in government jobs without pay. Senator Jacob Javits initiated the Citizens Committee for New York City in hopes of "recruiting 10,000 volunteers to staff public libraries and health clinics, to form auxiliary police squads and clean sidewalks."[60] "Citizen Group Suggests Volunteers Be Used to Fill Gaps in City Services," ran an article headline in *The New York Times* on December 2, 1975. The Fiscal Crisis ended, but the services were not restored. Indeed, the Citizens Committee remains active today, stepping in with volunteer efforts and corporate funding to make up for still-absent services; on its board of directors sit the heads of financial firms that were both the protagonists in and beneficiaries of the fiscal crisis in the first place.

By the mid-1990s, Andrew Greely could report in the *American Prospect* that "over the past decade something astonishing has happened. The rate of volunteering is higher [in the United States] than anywhere else in the world."[61] Americans indeed volunteer for work crucial to collective life including firefighting and emergency medical rescue, the staffing of hospitals, and the running of schools—think of all the PTA, or parent teacher association, meetings. What happens in other capitalist democracies? Often, people are paid to do these tasks. Their labor is commodified. Finally, it is worth noting that, in the United States, while the giving of money to charity is often itself a money-making venture because of the tax deduction it carries, the giving of *time* through volunteer labor is not granted the same fiscal incentive. Here we see how decommodified labor participates in the same structural weakness viz. its relation to capital as does commodified labor.

The civic constitutes a peculiar category within both Marxism and liberalism. Older theories of the division between productive and non-productive labor would argue that the civic dwells outside the scope of surplus-value production.[62] But the civic also locates a peculiar lacuna in liberal theories of the state. If the project of liberalism is to disavow the economy as constitutive of the liberal political frame itself, then the civic becomes a crucial site for the symptomatic theorization of state-building activity as a form of non-work, as a non-economic activity. In the research of sociologists such as Elisabeth S. Clemens and Theda Skocpol, we may recognize how decommodied labor as civic undertaking has been both introduced and catalogued but rendered extra-economic because of its lack of wage. Clemens formulates a "three-sector model" of social organization composed of "state, market, [and] voluntary sphere."[63] Skocpal claims that the Federalist structure of the United States has "encouraged a process of what I call 'competitive emulation,' in which people from one state vied with those in other states to see who could do a better and faster job of spreading the shared associational

undertaking" of nation building.[64] In both examples we see civic work theorized as non-economic (even though it is competitive!) because it is oriented toward the state and not the wage.

Universities

Readers of *Lateral* will be unsurprised to see this category: from uncompensated student work, to uncompensated peer-faculty work (editing, reviewing, publishing, particularly for adjuncts and others not on salary), to the turning over of such documents as dissertations to for-profit companies (Wiley and Springer, for example) without compensation as a condition of graduation, to, now, "volunteer adjuncts," universities have long been leaders in the field of decommodified labor. Scholars such as Randy Martin, Marc Bousquet, and Chris Newfield have all done exceptional research on the structural aspects of universities' labor and finance practices; here I simply want to note a congruence with my contention of decommodified labor.[65]

Such decommodified labor spans the academic disciplines. The journal *Nature* recently ran an article entitled, "Unpaid Research Jobs Draw Criticism" and noted that "the practice of using free labour to do field work" has increased substantially over the past fifteen years to the point where some scientific researchers pay their own travel, accommodations and so on while doing fieldwork without compensation.[66] At the same time as decommodifed labor expands into full-fledged "research jobs," it also moves into more menial academic positions. Teaching assistantships, once the province of graduate students—themselves often consigned to the feudal role of "apprentice"— are now increasingly staffed by undergraduates who work without pay and, in the most extravagant cases, pay to work. In its college advice section—the article's placement in such a prominent publication alerts us to how widespread the practice is—*USA Today* explains that: "Unlike graduate TAs, undergraduate TAs are not always paid. Instead, undergraduate TAs sometimes receive class credit—and a grade—for their effort. . . . Serving as a TA involves ample time and effort. If you cannot afford to give up this time and effort without monetary compensation (i.e. you believe your time may be better spent working a job for which you will be paid), you may want to decline the offer."[67]

Internships

The internship, of course, is what many people will first think of when presented with the concept of decommodified labor. And, it is true, internship histrionics have their own history of spectacular exploitation. Think of Ivanka Trump, for example, tweeting advice about "how to survive an unpaid internship in New York City" at her own company.[68] It was not until 2011 that the first book-length study of this new category of work emerged with Ross Perlin's *Intern Nation*.[69] Perlin notes that of the "approximately 9.5 million [undergraduates]—a large majority, perhaps as many as 75 percent, undertake at least one internship before they graduate," what he calls a "striking and novel development." He goes on to explain that: internships are changing the nature of work and education in America . . . [becoming] the principal point of entry for young people into the white-collar world." Because in some states, including New York, for profit companies are prohibited from offering unpaid internships, Perlin notes that "a significant number of these situations are . . . illegal under U.S. law." (As was Trump's.)

But it is the "non-profit" sector, including the Federal government, which excels in recruiting and administering the decommodified labor of interns to the point that economists have wondered to what extent wage rates in Washington DC are in fact depressed as a result—a kind of reverse multiplier effect. And, of course, once wages are withheld, many other forms of non-payment follow: social security tax, Medicare, pay-roll

tax and so on. The proliferation of decommodified labor suggests not simply an evacuation of the personal wage, but of the social wage as well.[70]

Prisons

Prisons represent an ambiguous category for the location of decommodifed labor. Labor, as we know, is "free" labor and within labor's illusory freedom various sites of constraint circumscribe the life of the worker. In prison, however, inmates are often forced to work without pay. At that point, we are no longer speaking of decommodified labor because we are out of the realm of labor *per se*.[71] Indeed, in such a case we might better speak of indentured servitude or forms of neo-capitalist slavery, as many scholars have argued.[72] That does not mean such labor is not part of capitalism, or that it is not productive; we need not return to those debates of the 1960s and 70s about whether slavery was capitalistic.[73] Instead, we should note that the wage renders the non-wage productive, and vice versa. As Marx himself says: "Capital . . . is not only . . . the command over labour. It is essentially the command over unpaid labour."[74] He consequently affirms that "the secret of the self-expansion of capital resolves itself into having the disposal of a definite quantity of other people's unpaid labour."[75]

Indeed, the expansion of prison as a reactionary racist force throughout the 1970s and 80s, as Jordan Camp has argued, is part of the same crisis of the Keynesian state as is the decommodified labor I have attempted to define throughout this article.[76] But prison labor denotes an interstice in which labor cedes into something else; it represents the limit of the wage. In a similar limit case, *The Washington Post* notes that in majority white populations throughout the US south, many are paid not to work through disability schemes. "Between 1996 and 2015, the number of working-age adults receiving disability climbed from 7.7 million to 13 million. The federal government [spends more on disability payments] than the combined total for food stamps, welfare, housing subsidies and unemployment assistance."[77] Finally, the *Post* highlights the racial character of disability payments by specifying such payments as "a force that has reshaped scores of mostly white, almost exclusively rural communities, where as many as one-third of working-age adults live on monthly disability checks." As with not getting paid, or getting paid a pittance, for prison work, getting paid for "disability" represents the limits of the wage form and not necessarily a site for the identification of decommodified labor. Thus, I disagree with Peter Frase who suggests that "insofar as there are programs like unemployment protection, socialized medicine, and guaranteed income security in retirement–and insofar as eligibility for these programs is close to universal–we can say that labor has been partially de-commodified."[78]

What, finally, does this section of my article offer examples of? As a regime of relative surplus value and real subsumption is established, labor becomes a ghostly repetition of itself. In these examples, we see the local and proximal form such labor takes. The appropriate and necessary term for this state of affairs is *decommodified labor*. Using his own distinction between wealth and value, Moishe Postone concludes *Time, Labor and Social Domination* with this remarkable claim: "As capitalist industrial production . . . [develops], proletarian labor becomes increasingly superfluous from the standpoint of the production of material wealth, hence, ultimately anachronistic; yet it remains necessary as the source of value . . . .[T]he more developed capital becomes, the more it renders the very labor it requires for its constitution empty and fragmented."[79] This describes our moment of labor's truth.

Conclusion

Why is decommodified labor something in need of new conceptual differentiation? Why is it not a reapplication of the kind of care work and other feminized and racialized forms of devalued labor on which capitalism has long—like, always—depended? Or does decommoodified labor have at its root the kind of potentially metaphorical reach that "real subsumption" has turned out to have? Could we understand it in a spatial language of inside/outside, a kind of Deleuzian fold in the field of the wage? These questions seem to me to offer some real criticisms of my argument.

In response, I would suggest that decommodified labor might help us specify and better understand how aspects of care work and housework have been absorbed and reconfigured in formal employment. Indeed, decommodified labor may help us to recognize how regimes of surplus value accumulation are reflected in the basic sale of the labor commodity itself. I would further proffer that keeping the question of labor within the realm of the commodity form provides surer theoretical footing on which to stand when attempting to make a claim on labor's present than does appealing to technology—itself a form of socialized labor. Such technology-based periodizing might alert us to labor's discourses or to workers' experience of labor, but it will not lead us to an understanding of labor's structural relationship to capital. Indeed, it might obfuscate that relationship through the very language of novelty and transformation that has been a fundamental accompaniment to modern discourses on technology.

In surveying capitalism's history, we can see that it has always relied on decommodified labor to pace, interrupt, disorganize and render profitable commodified labor. Much as it has always relied on deskilling. And deindustrialization. Value as a social process necessarily contains within it the possibility of devaluation. I have tried to delimit a moment in which this process becomes perceptible within labor. By placing that process within formal places of work, I have tried to show how truly expansive it may become. Decommodified labor is not new, but then, neither is affect, neither is mentality, neither is cognition. Indeed, "digitality" itself is now being theorized "without computers" perhaps a precursor to showing its *longue durée* as well.[80]

Notes

1. This post is from the film industry job website, Mandy.com. "If you search Mandy.com for the phrase "payment is on an unpaid basis," you'll find dozens upon dozens of opportunities to work as a film editor or a production assistant or even a puppet master where all that's offered is the ability to add a credit to one's IMDB page and maybe get a complimentary DVD of the production." Charles Davis, "Payment is on an Unpaid Basis," *The Baffler*, October 1, 2014, https://thebaffler.com/latest/payment-unpaid-basis.
2. Fredric Jameson, *Value: The Representation of Labor* (London: Verso, 2011).
3. Bethany Moreton, "The Future of Work: The Rise and Fall of the Job," *Pacific Standard,* October 22, 2015, https://psmag.com/economics/the-future-of-work-the-rise-and-fall-of-the-job. Michael Denning, "Wageless Life," *New Left Review* 66 (November-December 2010). Also of note, throughout the 1990s, there were predictions of "the end of work," whose causality was located in technology. See, for example, Stanley *Aronowitz* and William DiFazio, *The Jobless Future* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).
4. Lauren Weber, "The End of Employees," *The Wall Street Journal*, February 2, 2017, https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-end-of-employees-1486050443; http://fortune.com/2011/03/25/unpaid-jobs-the-new-normal/.
5. For the class-based cruelness of reality television, see Anna McCarthy "Reality Television: A Neoliberal Theatre of Suffering," *Social Text* 93, 25, no. 4 (Winter 2007).

For reality television as a leader in unpaid labor, see Tanner Mirrlees, "Reality TV's Low-Wage and No-Wage Work," *Alternate Routes* 27 (2016): 187–212. I will examine reality television later in this essay.

6. Jordan Sargent, "Urban Outfitters' Fall Strategy: Asking Employees To Work For Free," *Gawker*, October 7, 2015, http://gawker.com/urban-outfitters-fall-strategy-asking-employees-to-wor-1735228986.
7. See *Girls,* Season 1, episode 3,"All Adventurous Women Do," dir. Lena Dunham, HBO, April 29, 2012.
8. This bulky but useful phrase is from Stewart Martin, "The Absolute Artwork Meets the Absolute Commodity," *Radical Philosophy,* 146 (December/November 2007): 15–25, 17.
9. Robert Brenner, *The Economics of Global Turbulence* (New York: Verso, 2006), xxviii.
10. See Lane Windham, *Knocking on Labor's Door* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2017).
11. See the fascinating dissertation by Aaron Benanav, *A Global History of Unemployment* (UCLA, 2015), http://escholarship.org/uc/item/7r14v2bq#: "Since 1950, 3 factors have made it possible to tell a global history of unemployment: 1—a massive increase in the world's population, the working population in particular; 2—a green revolution which significantly reduced the price of food, but also resulted in a worldwide wave of agricultural exit; 3—global wave of deindustrialization" (3).
12. We are reminded of Ernest Mandel's great comment: "Keynes' classic answer to his critics {was}: 'in the long-run we are all dead.' It was an outlook of a class condemned by history. " Ernest Mandel, *Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1975), 415, note 23.
13. See Leigh Claire La Berge, *Scandals and Abstraction: Financial Fiction of the Long 1980s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 4.
14. This division is different from Marx's own division of labor power, a potential that we all have, and labor, that which is ultimately sold in exchange and used to produce surplus value.
15. The genealogy of the emergence of "affective labor" is impressive. See, for example, Patricia Clough, ed., *The Affective Turn* (Durham: Duke, 2007); see also Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2000), for their cognate term "immaterial labor." In Michael Palm, *Technologies of Consumer Labor: A History of Self-Service* (New York: Routledge, 2016), Palm introduces the helpful term "consumer labor." He notes that it was precisely during the post-war boom—that untouchable bastion of American labor history, its "golden age"—that "self-service" as a form of what he calls "consumer labor," appears. Palm's is a helpful and important term; I would suggest consumer labor is a subset, not only of domestic labor, as he suggests, but of decommodified labor as well.
16. I am indebted to Moishe Postone's interpretation of Marx's labor theory of value in *Time, Labor and Social Domination* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), wherein labor itself is a socially produced form of abstract domination. I return to it throughout this article.
17. Rather it moves between sites of its own abstract and concrete potentialities. In its concrete dimension, the daily activities of social reproduction are value producing. But this is possible only because they are necessarily abstract, too.
18. See Karl Polanyi's "double movement" of capital as theorized in *The Great Transformation* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1944); Giovanni Arrighi interprets the same problem as a spatialization of MCM' in *The Long Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1994); for something totally different see David Graeber on alternating cycles of

credit money vs. specie money in *Debt: The First 5000 Years* (New York: Melville House, 2012).

19. See also, Gareth Dale, "Social Democracy, Embeddedness and Decommodification: On the Conceptual Innovations and Intellectual Affiliations of Karl Polanyi," *New Political Economy* 15: 369–393.
20. Gosta Epsing-Anderson, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990).
21. Epsing-Anderson, *The Three Worlds*, 22.
22. Peter Frase, "Decommodification in Everyday Life," July 7, 2011, http://www.peterfrase.com/2011/06/de-commodification-in-everyday-life/.
23. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (New York: Penguin, 1993), 159.
24. Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Labor in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 117.
25. Bruce G. Carruthers, "Financial Decommodification: Risk and the Politics of Valuation in U.S. Banks," May 2014, http://kenan.ethics.duke.edu/wp-content/blogs.dir/2/files/2013/10/carruthers_final_1_22.pdf
26. Doing so allows me to avoid the problems that Melinda Cooper has astutely noted; she writes "in general, leftist demands for the decommodification of social life or the protection of kinship relations all too readily lend themselves to the social conservative argument that certain forms of (domestic, feminized) labor should remain unpaid." Melinda Cooper, *Family Values* (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2017), 23.
27. Nell Gluckman, "Want to Be a 'Volunteer Adjunct'? Southern Illinois U. Is Hiring," *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* April 24, 2018, https://www.chronicle.com/article/Want-to-Be-a-Volunteer/243221. John Warner, "Volunteer Faculty: The Death Knell for Public Higher Ed," *Inside Higher Ed*, April 25, 2018, https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/just-visiting/volunteer-faculty-death-knell-public-higher-ed.
28. The key text here is Viviana Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985). Zelizer notes that children were essentially forced out of work by new, and newly white, immigrants in the 1920s.
29. In many countries—most, no doubt—children are waged workers. For a recent consideration of children as workers, see "In Bolivia, Legitimizing Child Labor," *The New York Times*, online video, December 19, 2015.
30. See the international Wages for Housework movement and Silvia Federici's even more apt essay "Wages Against Housework," in Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero* (Oakland: PM Press, 2012), which contains a reprint of the essay with Federici's retrospections. More recently, see See Tithi Bhattacharya's edited collection, *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression* (London: Pluto, 2017).
31. See Joe Austin, *Taking the Train: How Graffiti Art Became an Urban Crisis in New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), chapter 2.
32. What we also see here is that decommodified labor does not produce a class-based configuration of workers as they engage with and are metabolized by capital, but a kind of momentary emergence, sharing a certainly similarity with post-structuralist approaches to Marx.
33. They famously each attribute the phrase to the other.
34. Moishe Postone explains this dynamic applies at a narrative level to the process of reading *Capital Vol. I*. The reading practice is synecdochal for the historical practice:

"What seems to be historical unfolding is actually a progression backwards . . . based on a logical reconstruction of the dynamic character of capitalism . . . only when it is developed." Postone, *Time, Labor and Social Domination*, 285.

35. The full quotation reads, "There has never been an epoch that did not feel itself to be 'modern' in the sense of eccentric, and did not believe itself to be standing directly before an abyss. The desperately clear consciousness of being in the middle of a crisis is something chronic in humanity." Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982) 677.
36. See for example, Christian Fuchs, *Reading Marx in the Information Age: A Media and Communication Studies Perspective on Capital Volume 1* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Christian Fuchs, *Culture and Economy in the Age of Social Media* (New York: Routledge, 2015); and Christian Fuchs, *Digital Labour and Karl Marx* (New York: Routledge, 2014)
37. Christian Fuchs, "Digital Labor and Imperialism" *Monthly Review* 67, no. 8 (January 2016), https://monthlyreview.org/2016/01/01/digital-labor-and-imperialism/.
38. Christian Fuchs, "Theorising and Analysing Digital Labour: From Global Value Chains to Modes of Production," *The Political Economy of Communication* 1, no. 2 (2013).
39. Fuchs, "Digital Labor."
40. Fuchs, "Theorising and Analysing."
41. Fuchs, "Theorising and Analysing."
42. Leigh Claire La Berge, *Wages Against Artwork: Socially Engaged Art and Decommodified Labor* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).
43. See David Edgarton for a nice overview of the problems with such technological history: *The Shock of the Old: Technology and Global History Since 1900* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007).
44. For deskilling in labor, see Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975); for a necessary recent take on deindustrialization, see Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton* (New York: Penguin, 2014).
45. "The difference between the technical composition and the value composition is manifested in each branch of industry in that the value-relation of the two portions of capital may vary while the technical composition is constant, and the value-relation may remain the same while the technical composition varies. . . . The value-composition of capital, inasmuch as it is determined by, and reflects, its technical composition, is called the organic composition of capital." Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. III, Chapter 8, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1894-c3/ch08.htm.
46. For a wonderful overview, see Martijn Konings and Leo Panitch's collection *American Empire and the Political Economy of Global Finance* (New York: Palgrave, 2008).
47. Ibid. p. 47.
48. Jason Read, "A Genealogy of Homo-Economicus: Neoliberalism and the Production of Subjectivity," *Foucault Studies* 6 (2009): 25–36; 29.
49. Mario Tronti, "Social Capital, or, *Il piano del capitale*," *Zerowork*, Supplemental (Historical) Materials, http://www.zerowork.org/TrontiSocialCapital.htm. This translation of Tronti was first published in *Telos* 17 (Fall 1973): 98–121, and the original, "Il Piano del capitale," was published in *Quaderni Rossi* 3 (1963): 44–73, and reprinted in Mario Tronti, *Operaie Capitale* (Turin: Einaudi, 1966, 1971), 267–311.
50. Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2004).

51. Michael Hardt and Toni Negri, *The Labor of Dionysus* (Minneapolis: UM Press, 1991), 11.
52. Jonathan Crary, *24/7: The Ends of Sleep* (New York: Verso, 2013).
53. Benanav, *Global History of Unemployment*, 15.
54. George Caffentzis, "Throwing Away The Ladder: The Universities In The Crisis," *Zerowork* 1, December 1975, http://zerowork.org/CaffentzisThrowingAway.html, accessed July 2017.
55. See Mirrlees, ""Reality TV's," 191.
56. Mark Andrejevic, *Reality TV: The Work of Being Watched* (Rowman and Littlefield: 2003).
57. With over 80 percent of nonprofits utilizing volunteers, about 6.5 percent of the entire US population (15 million people) was volunteering on an average day in 2006 —hours that would otherwise require the equivalent of 7.6 million full-time employees and $66 billion in wages at the absolute least (using the 2006 federal minimum wage)." Ross Perlin, *Intern Nation* (New York: Verso, 2013), 123.
58. Michael Noer, "The PGA Tour's Secret Army," *Forbes*, August 2, 2011, *www.forbes.com/sites/michaelnoer/2012/08/02/the-pga-tours-secret-army/*.
59. Cincinnati Masters, Volunteer Guide, available online at http://www.wsopen.com/Volunteers/all_volunteers/, accessed May 3, 2018.
60. This history is from Kim Phillips Fein, *Fear City* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2017), 218.
61. Andrew Greely, "The Tocqueville Files," *American Prospect* (May/June 1997), archived at http://prospect.org/archive?field_issue_date_value%5Bvalue%5D%5Byear%5D=1997.
62. See Ian Gough, "Marx's Theory of Productive and Unproductive Labor," *New Left Review* 76 (November/December 1972), for a critique and undoing of this division.
63. See Elisabeth S. Clemens and Doug Gutherie, eds., *Politics and Partnerships: The Role of Voluntary Associations in America's Political Past and Present* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 3.
64. Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 93.
65. See Marc Bousquet, *How the University Works* (New York: NYU Press, 2008); Christopher Newfield, *Unmaking the Public University* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2008); Randy Martin, *Under New Management* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2011).
66. Chris Woolston, "Unpaid Research Jobs Draw Criticism," *Nature*, June, 2 2015, http://www.nature.com/news/unpaid-research-jobs-draw-criticism-1.17697.
67. Varsity Tutors, "Should you be an undergraduate TA?" *USA Today*, June 30, 2015, http://college.usatoday.com/2015/06/30/should-you-be-an-undergraduate-ta/.
68. "Ivanka Trump's Advice to Unpaid Interns Sparks Backlash," Twitter Moments, August 19, 2016, https://twitter.com/i/moments/766748172601352192
69. Ross Perlin, *Intern Nation* (New York: Verso, 2013).

70. Perlin provides many statistics in his book to document the increase of such labor, as do websites such as independentsector.org, which keeps a running tab of "volunteer time," expended in the United States as well as its estimated value. Such documentation is necessary but not sufficient for taking note of decommodified labor.
71. United States employment law reflects these contradictions: Section 26 U.S.C. 3306(c)(21) of the tax code states that any service performed in a penal institution isn't considered employment.
72. The classic study here is, of course, Ruth Wilson Gilmore's *Golden Gulag* (Berkeley: California UP, 2006).
73. For the long discussion of whether or how slavery should be considered capitalist in terms of the debate's impressive historiography, see Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2000).
74. Karl Marx, *Capital,* Vol. 1 (London: Penguin, 1976), 376–7.
75. Ibid.
76. See Jordan T. Camp, *Incarcerating the Crisis* (Berkeley: UC Press, 2016).
77. Terrence McCoy, "Disabled or Just Desperate?" *The Washington* Post, March 30, 2017, http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/local/2017/03/30/disabled-or-just-desperate/
78. Frase, "Decommodification."
79. Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination,* 356.
80. See Seb Franklin, *Control: Digitality as Cultural Logic* (Cambridge: MIT UP, 2015), chapter 1.

Bio



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Imagined Immunities: Abjection, Contagion and the Neoliberal Debt Economy

Liane Tanguay

ABSTRACT This paper addresses the pervasiveness of contagion as a structure of feeling by putting Maurizio Lazzarato's biopolitics of indebtedness in dialogue with Roberto Esposito's insight that debt is the very condition of both community and its dialectical opposite, immunity. Where Esposito does not sufficiently engage the role of financialized or neoliberal capitalism within the contemporary crisis, Lazzarato develops a Marxian account of debt that complements Esposito's "immunitarian biopolitics," revealing it as an intrinsically capitalist one, and allows us to ground it in contemporary power structures through Marx's figure of M-M'.

Abjection: Two "Chiral" Scenarios

In the 2009 science fiction film *Surrogates* (Jonathan Mostow), an implausible 98% of the world's inhabitants interact with one another using remote-controlled, humanoid robotic avatars known, eponymously, as "surrogates." From the "comfort and safety of their own homes," we are told, people experience the world, including the company of others, "without risk of disease or injury," such that violent crime and communicable disease have "dropped to record lows."[1] The premise, if on the one hand a logical extrapolation of our tendency to buffer social interactions through emails, text messages, social media, and the like, nonetheless raises a few vexing questions (not least logistical ones), but it also speaks to something more deeply entrenched in the forms of subjectivity and social life proper to late capitalist modernity, projecting its particular biopolitics onto a fantasized future.

To wit, a scenario in which people continue to occupy a shared space, but from within the security and isolation of their own private dwellings, is one of total *immunity*—not just in the biomedical sense (e.g., from airborne threats like toxins and disease), or even from criminal violence, but also from the sheer inconvenience of encounters with other persons and the corresponding obligations that ensue. Indeed it is in this quite precise sense that I invoke Roberto Esposito's etymological inquiry into the term, according to which *munus* denotes a duty, obligation, or debt, and the prefix *im-*, therefore, an exemption from such, with the juridical usage predating the medical one by a few centuries at least.[2] In this reading too, its dialectical counterpart, *com*munity, points to a *shared* obligation or debt that in its constitutive un-payability, and in the modern context of secularization and individualization, demands the erection of an "apparatus of immunization"[3] that for Western modernity comprises the *dispositifs* of property, liberty, and civil and political rights.[4] Premised on "the proper"—and by extension on its cognates, such as *property* and *proprietary individualism*—this "immunitarian biopolitics" is specifically a capitalist one, most effectively given form in the market, where subjects are enjoined to participate in social and economic exchange without exposing themselves to "obligation" in either its existential sense or the hierarchical one demanded by feudalism.

For Esposito's contemporary Luigino Bruni, indeed, it is precisely the "rationale of the market" that points, in theory, to the kind of futuristic vision depicted in *Surrogates*.[5] Bruni asks us to imagine a world in which

> each family has its own house acoustically and visually isolated from others . . . the few remaining skyscrapers are constructed so as to avoid all encounters on the stairs or on the landings; . . . office and workplace communications are solely via email . . . Conflicts have been eliminated because the precondition for conflict, that is, the need to maintain a common ground, has itself been eliminated.[6]

Though robotic avatars are not included in Bruni's vision, *Surrogates* plays out the culmination of Esposito's "immunitarian biopolitics," bringing the immunitary right to carve out "one's own" from "the common"[7] to the point where *community*, conceived as a subjective threshold or rupture,[8] is safely reconfigured as pure simulacrum, to be navigated and withdrawn from at will by fully "immune" individuals safely ensconced in their homes.

Needless to say, events take an unfortunate turn. Inevitably people's surrogates start getting "killed," and ultimately all of them, mutually networked as they are, fall victim to (of all things) a virus. In a particularly jarring scene towards the end, a bustling rush-hour crowd of surrogates collapses *en masse* as a total systemic failure takes hold; subsequent scenes depict a cityscape strewn with these ambiguous "bodies," cars veering helplessly into one another and onto sidewalks. Offices, subways, and shops are littered with uncanny/abjected figures that we "know" not to confuse with their actual human operators, but that deploy nonetheless the semiotics of a large-scale and properly human catastrophe. Indeed it is at precisely this moment that the remote-controlled avatars are most uncannily similar to their more familiar biohorror counterparts, the virally transformed ex-humans or "zombies" whose fate is to be slaughtered without hesitation or regret. Indeed the same, eerie "posthuman" silence hangs over these abjected, slaughtered figures in scenes from, for instance, *The Walking Dead* as over the abruptly disabled avatars of *Surrogates*. And the resonance between the two ostensibly disparate scenarios, I believe, suggests that the total immunity of Bruni's extrapolative vision, and the total contagion of the more Hobbesian, post-apocalyptic one, may be anything but mutually exclusive.

This resonance might be described as "chiral," in the sense of that "mirroring" property of certain chemical compounds that, while identical, are non-superimposable and have very different effects. I have previously borrowed this term from an early episode of *Breaking Bad* in which a chemistry lecture delivered by the protagonist, Walter White, foreshadows his transformation from hapless, insolvent family man to criminal mastermind,[9] and used it to read the criminal underworld of that series as an inverted mirror-image of our own, late capitalist or neoliberal world.[10] In the present context, "chirality" helps to illuminate how a "structure of feeling" in which an excess of immunity (*Surrogates*) is "mirrored" by its catastrophic opposite (e.g., *The Walking Dead*) derives from a particular moment in late capitalism, namely, the ascendancy of what Maurizio Lazzarato calls the "neoliberal debt economy."[11]

If it seems counterintuitive to read Esposito's poststructuralist take on immunity—for which "debt" is of an existential nature—alongside Lazzarato's autonomist Marxist reading of a more distinctly financial debt, it is nonetheless on the plane of the biopolitical that the two can be articulated together. The linchpin is what Esposito conceives as the *dispositif* of "the proper," expressed in, among other things, the relation of *ownership* that, under capitalist modernity, comes to ground the whole complex of "immunitary" rights in the

structural and symbolic order of private property (including, of course, capital). Esposito's "immunitarian"—and in principle egalitarian—biopolitics is indeed distinctly capitalist, coming into its own, so to speak, just as "individualistic models" of social organization begin taking the place of communitarian ones.[12] For Lazzarato, in turn, it is precisely property (a modality of the proper) that under conditions of financialization is "deterritorialized" into the realm of capital securities and debt instruments.[13] In the process, I would argue, the "immunitary" mediations of Western modernity as described by Esposito, and grounded as they are in "the proper," are deterritorialized as well. Yet neoliberal ideology doubles down in its insistence on, precisely, the immunitary functions of ownership, i.e. property, as the foundation of existential security, even as the generalized crisis precipitated by financialization exposes more and more citizens to the risks of precarity and expropriation. Herein lies the "chiral" center between visions of total immunity on the one hand and total contagion on the other. As a structure of feeling —the articulation of affective investments and tensions pointing to the "omissions," the "consequences, as lived"[14] of otherwise "formally held and systematic beliefs,"[15] namely those of the "ownership society" promulgated by these ideologies—this tension between immunity and contagion expresses a crisis in the *dispositif* of the proper, in the mediation between power and life.

In the following pages, I will review the salience of the contagion metaphor in particular, and flesh out Esposito's claims about immunity and the "immunized community" as the biopolitical objective of Western capitalist modernity. But where Esposito's otherwise immensely productive inquiry tends to bracket the function of capitalism in this immunitary configuration, I will turn to Lazzarato's biopolitics of debt, with particular attention to the shift from the Marxian equation for capitalist accumulation (M-C-M') to that for financial accumulation (M-M') as encoding the dissolution of "C" as a modality of the proper with an "immunitary" function. The figure of "human capital" that emerges in this financialized biopolitics is not just the "productive" one of Foucauldian theory (the "entrepreneur of the self") but also a liminal and constitutively exposed one for whom immunity is both an inescapable imperative and an utter impossibility, and it is the inevitable anxieties arising from this condition of perpetual exposure that find their cultural mediations not only in biohorror but in the pervasive sense of crisis that permeates contemporary politics.

Contagion as the 'Hermeneutics of Everything'

There is no question that contagion has in recent years taken on the function of what Angela Mitropoulos calls a "hermeneutics of everything."[16] What Greg Bird and Jonathan Short call the "crisis of the proper" is one in which *contact* in all of its forms threatens the ontological integrity of the subject, from body to body politic.[17] Diseases, chemicals, vaccinations, endocrine disruptors, glutens, and parabens threaten bodily boundaries and the systems internal to them, while distracted driving, sexting, obesity, drug abuse, and mass shootings take on "epidemic" proportions at a social level, and while terrorism and climate change threaten to breach our best defenses on the national and the global scale alike. Though body panic and its analogues are nothing new, what seems to distinguish the present is the way in which disparate threats merge together, generating a permanent immunological state of exception that promises no return to any norm;[18] indeed it is difficult to imagine a future in which immunological boundaries would need to be anything but perpetually reinforced. Bird and Short's "crisis of the proper," indeed, entails a sense that "everything is . . . brought into proximity and correlation" and that "nothing . . . can be effectively isolated, insulated [and] immunized as proper to itself";[19] the loss of sovereignty individual, popular and national, the breakdown of the law's protective or immunizing function, the implosion of the symbolic order of liberal-democratic capitalism,

and the concomitant exposure to violence and expropriation would seem to implicate the very ontology of the modern subject, above and beyond any particular ideological commitments.

Modern subjectivity is for Esposito an "invention" of modernity's "immunization paradigm," starting with the Hobbesian social contract whereby persons relinquished their acquisitive instincts in exchange for sovereign protection; "immunity" in this context means the legally protected right to mark out "one's own," institutionalized in property, liberty, and civil and political rights. If "community" denotes not a positive entity but a liminal space between self and non-self, with the *munus* a threshold of exposure and contamination binding the subject to an unchosen debt,[20] then the modern Western subject is invented as an insulated one for whom the dangers of that threshold have been neutralized, and who is thereby relieved of any such debt. To be clear, there is no golden-ageism here connecting a "genuine" community (as "shared obligation") to some pre-capitalist utopia—the "debts" of feudalism were non-reciprocal and rigidly hierarchical, "immunizing" those at the top from the contaminations to which the rest were constitutively exposed (or, to put it another way, the "immunized community" eluded us long before capitalism and will probably do so long after).[21] But what distinguishes a specifically *capitalist* "immunitarian biopolitics" is that the "law's protection of [the subject's] *possessive* capacity"—the capacity, precisely, to withdraw from community—becomes, under capitalism, the very condition of community as such.[22] Thus, Esposito reads *immunitas* dialectically with *communitas* as its negative but constitutively enabling form, operating very much by the logic of medical immunization.[23] In order to survive, he claims, a community "[introjects] the negative modality of its opposite," in this case, in the form of proprietary individualism.[24] It is perhaps in Rousseau's social contract rather than Hobbes' that the dialectic can be seen to function most seamlessly, perfectly harmonizing sacrifice with sovereignty. As Terry Eagleton explains, "[i]f all citizens alienate their rights entirely to the community, 'each man, in giving himself to all, gives himself to nobody', and so receives himself back again as a free, autonomous being."[25]

For 20th century capitalism, it is the postwar compromise between capitalism and labour that comes closest to enacting this immunitary vision. But the dialectic is now, it would seem, irreparably broken; in Esposito's words, "we are no longer inside the immunitary semantics of the classical modern period," and the mediation "between politics and the preservation of life" has now "[diminished] in favour of a more immediate superimposition between power and life."[26] Esposito describes the contemporary crisis as a consequence of "excessive demands" for immunity in a globalized world, with the "small walls" erected by various fundamentalisms replacing the Cold War's "Big Wall" as an immunitary "counterweight" to the increasing interpenetration of (imagined) communities and cultures.[27] If there is some truth to this, it nevertheless fails to account for globalization as a specifically *capitalist* project, and now more than ever a financialized one. It is curious, too, that an entire philosophical *oeuvre* that turns on the question of debt overlooks the possibility that *debt in its neoliberal specificity* may have something to do with the contemporary erosion of the "mediations" between power and life that modernity's "immunitarian biopolitics" had put into place. This is not to suggest a one-to-one correspondence between the existential debt of the human condition as such and the financial debt that pervades contemporary capitalist power; one is the condition for social life in any and all of its forms while the other is indelibly stamped with the specificities of our late-capitalist age.

But the two meet nonetheless in the nexus of the proper. If "immunity" turns on property, and finance "deterritorializes" the latter, then the indebtedness that Lazzarato calls the "most universal [condition] of modern-day capitalism"[28] might be placed in dialogue with

Esposito's immunitarian biopolitics in order to "tell a better story"[29] about the contemporary crisis, one that figures in, among other things, the "chiral" tension between immunitary and contagion with which I started out.[30]

Lazzarato, like Esposito, sees a biopolitics at work in the *dispositif* of property, and thus a "biopolitics of indebtedness" wrought by its deterritorialization under the latest round of financialization. The story he tells is a familiar one among critics of neoliberalism: the abandonment of the gold standard and the Bretton Woods agreement effectively undercut the state's monetary sovereignty and "[brought] together a neoliberal alliance" that has "systematically taken aim at the logic of the Welfare State"[31]—a configuration in which the state imposed some limits and redistributive pressures on private capital, and which Zygmunt Bauman, notably, referred to as the "ultimate modern embodiment of the idea of community."[32] Sovereignty—once the guarantor of immunity—is increasingly the prerogative of the "Universal Creditor,"[33] which, with the dismantling of regulatory frameworks, comes to impose the same burdens on the state as it does on individual citizens, compelling it, through discipline, evaluation, and metrics-based assessment, to abandon its "immunitary" functions. The "social rights" that mitigated the asymmetry of the capital-labor relationship are eclipsed by "social debt,"[34] with access to state services a question no longer of "right" but "eligibility," measured always under suspicion and in the shadow of a Nietzschean "bad conscience."[35] The creditor-debtor relation displaces, indeed, that between capital and labor, as stagnant wages force a large-scale turn to consumer credit, replacing the collective struggle over wages with a more atomized, solitary one over repayment terms and interest rates.[36] Debt, for Lazzarato, is not just a supplement to commodity capitalism but the "economic and subjective engine of the modern day economy" as well as the "strategic heart of neoliberal politics," representing a "transversal power relation unimpeded by State boundaries, the dualism of production . . . and the distinctions between the economy, the political, and the social."[37]. In other words, it erodes the "immunitary" mediations between power and life, insofar as these are taken to reside in the modern state's obligation towards its citizens.

Debt's particular biopolitics—its assault on the ontology of the always-already immunized subject of modernity—is more fully explained in an early essay by Karl Marx that Lazzarato cites at length, namely, "Comments on James Mill, *Éléments d'économie politique*." For Marx, capitalism makes the medium of (commodity) money already an alienating one, "[estranging] from man" the "human, social act by which man's products mutually complement one another";[38] yet for the classical political economy that is the object of Marx's critique, this estrangement is undone by the credit relation, given its ostensible foundation in *trust*. It appears, in the credit relation, "as though the power of the alien, material force were broken . . . and man had once more human relations to man."[39] To be sure, Marx asserts, this "trust" is only an illusion, for, in actual fact, in credit "the dehumanization is all the more infamous and extreme because its element is no longer commodity, metal, paper, but man's *moral* existence, man's *social* existence, the *inmost depths* of his heart."[40] Trust, in other words, has nothing to do with what Lazzarato calls "some noble sentiment toward oneself, others, and the world" but is rather "limited to a trust in solvency, [making] solvency the content and measure of the ethical relationship."[41] This is even more the case when, for Marx, a "rich man gives credit to a poor man" instead of a capitalist borrower:

> the life of the poor man and his talents and activity serve the rich man as a *guarantee* of the repayment of the money lent . . . All the social virtues of the poor man, the content of his vital activity, his existence itself, represent for the rich man the reimbursement of his capital with the customary interest."[42]

Thus credit appropriates, through debt, "not only the physical and intellectual abilities the poor man employs in his labor, but also his social and existential forces";[43] man becomes "a *mediator* of exchange, not however as a man, but as the *mode of existence of capital* and interest."[44] Lazzarato offers the wording that connects debt in the monetary sense with Esposito's *munus* or existential obligation. What the credit relation exploits is "'existential' life," with "existence" meaning the "power of self-affirmation, the forces of self-positioning, the choices that found and bear with them modes and styles of life"—to wit, "*the ethico-political constitution of the self and the community*."[45]

Even at the most stripped-down level of the credit relation, its encoding in the Marxian equation M-M', the analysis holds true. The market's promise of "immunized" exchange was predicated on the equation for simple circulation, C-M-C, occluding, necessarily, the persistent, deep-structural asymmetries built into M-C-M' (which of course has never entailed a remotely equitable distribution of immunity).[46] As Marx well knew, labour power becomes a commodity only under "definite, historically developed conditions" that make subsistence conditional on its sale and exploitation.[47] Yet, the fact that alienation and precarity have always been the generalized experience of capitalism—that immunity, in other words, has always been exclusive—should not deter us from conceiving the conjuncture as a dissolution of the latter. If property and its modalities are central to the immunitarian biopolitics of Western modernity, then the "failure of proprietary individualism" most recently and visibly exposed in 2008 portends a crisis that is more than just "financial."[48] For even in M-C-M', with "C" encoded as commodity or commodity labour power, property remained "territorialized," embedded within a productive economy in which it could be exchanged, even if under duress. The "C" as the "mediating" space of value production necessarily incorporated the capacities of living labour and was thus also the site of the "long, frenetic uphill struggle" that brought capitalist modernity to its "golden age" in the imperfect "compromise" of Keynesianism.[49] But the displacement of the capital-labor relation by that between creditor and debtor erodes the "mediating" C and disperses it among an atomized and disenfranchised precariat; in this, the function of the property, along with those of its modalities around which this "struggle" was fought —protections, wages, rights—is catastrophically undone. As Mario Tronti once observed, the history of capitalism consists in its drive to "[emancipate] itself from the working class,"[50] and the disembedding of property from the productive economy and its dissolution in the formula for "self-valorizing money," M-M',[51] brings this ultimate objective that much closer. In the process, the "sovereign individual" of Western modernity is left increasingly exposed, with immunity increasingly the privilege of the creditors.[52]

Monetary debt thus inscribes itself along the fault-line of originary debt, the threshold of the *munus*, the exposure to the "other-than-self" that the immunitary mechanisms of modernity maintained in a state of "regulated permeability." Dissolving the mediating C, it inscribes itself as pure and unmediated alienation, forcing the debtor to concede to the creditor not only his instincts but his person itself, exposing it unbearably to the appetites of an always more powerful Other. What the debtor cedes to the creditor, in effect, is her immunity. Disarticulated from community, immunity is now concentrated in the privileges and protections enjoyed by the wealthiest: exemption from regulatory requirements across all sectors, including those most directly destructive of the natural environment; exemption from accountability vis-a-vis what remains of the commons; exemption from levels of taxation that once ensured a degree of existential security to all citizens, these latter now left to manage this burden on their own, with all of its risks and liabilities. Nothing encodes the exclusivity of this privilege more succinctly than the very phrase "too big to fail," which marks the synthesis of total immunity with structural power and exposes the "immunized community" for the chimera that it is.[53]

If the "immunized community" has not been realized at any stage of capitalist social relations yet encountered, nonetheless the discourse of neoliberalism, obsessed as it is with "ownership," keeps the dream alive and well. The discourse of the "ownership society" advanced by George W. Bush, exhorting Americans to "empower" themselves and exercise more "choice" and "control" over their futures not only by purchasing real estate but by shrewdly managing their health care and pension plans, extended the immunitary promise of the proper into the very realm of existential security that the proverbial 1% were busily dismantling.[54] It also produces the figure of "human capital" in its Foucauldian sense as the "entrepreneur" encouraged to "invest" in itself in order to secure its future value.[55]

The biopolitics of indebtedness, however, produces a more sinister form of "human capital," one that brings us back to the question of contagion with which this paper began. As Alessandra De Marco notes, the "buried commodity" (C) absented from the equation M-M' can reemerge as a sort of "haunting presence,"[56] and this, I propose, is the biopolitical synthesis of subject and property that, far from empowering the subject, transforms it into a sort of "standing reserve" for the creditors. The figure of "human capital" is therefore marked by liminality, estranged from itself as "capital-with-interest," as the unmediated source of surplus value. As the *munus* or "ethico-political" threshold of subjectivity is pressed into the service of capital accumulation, the debtor's existential security is subordinated to "finance's goal of reducing what will be to what is";[57] meanwhile the total immunity of the creditors, the Wall Street manager, the corporate CEOs, is the inevitable obverse of that inescapable exposure that conditions the experience of Lazzarato's "indebted man."

It is easy to see, then, how the "conceptual metaphor" of contagion has come to infuse the "affective economy" of neoliberal capitalism, encoding the "crisis of the proper" occasioned by the universalization of indebtedness and its particular biopolitics. The logic of immunitary ownership pressed to extremes is the chiral counterpart of that pervasive dread of contagion, contamination and dissolution that has come to frame nearly every threat to body and body politic alike. Hence a structure of feeling that, whether mediated by the "surrogates" of Mostow's film or the shambling cadavers of the biohorror genre, foregrounds permutations of liminality and the Uncanny—the latter, as Nicholas Royle has defined it, entailing precisely a "crisis of the proper," a "critical disturbance . . . of the very idea of personal or private property" and a corresponding "strangeness of framing and borders."[58] Contagion as a structure of feeling encodes the contradiction between the "received consciousness" that promises total self-sufficiency through immunitary ownership and a lived experience that is inescapably indebted and precarious. Indeed, there may be no better metaphor for the equation M-M' than the virus itself, or the viral zombie, which seeks less to consume than to replicate itself by estranging the host from its body, transforming it into a source of virus-plus-interest.[59] If capital has long been allegorized as viral or vampiric, in the total debt economy capital *is* the virus:[60] the appropriation of its "purchasing power" is coterminous with subjectivation to a "structural power"[61] that reduces the body to an "interest-generating machine."[62] Given the identification of ownership with exposure, and the unsustainable top-heaviness of the immunitary structure that leaves all but the wealthiest permanently exposed, it is easy to see how the "chirality" between the closing scenes of *Surrogates* and the more common ones of biohorror encode the paradox of total immunization as the condition for total contagion.

Fredric Jameson long ago labelled conspiracy theory as the "poor person's cognitive mapping"—an attempt to apprehend, and make sense of, the deterritorializing flows of a global capitalist totality.[63] Perhaps, then, the boundary work performed by the dread of

contamination—the defensive drawing and redrawing of boundaries, similar to the work of abjection as famously theorized by Julia Kristeva in her essay *The Powers of Horror*[64] —can be seen as the "indebted person's cognitive mapping," an attempt to preserve the subject's ontological integrity from expropriation, to erect immunitary barriers around the body in keeping with neoliberalism's exhortations to "manage" one's own precarity and vulnerability. Such boundary work encodes precisely the breached immunity of the indebted subject, the liminality engendered by the risks and losses it must continually manage as the threshold demarcating bare from disposable life becomes ever more salient to lived experience. To be sure, as the "poor person" in Jameson's formulation is one not defined by net worth but who substitutes a paranoid fiction for true comprehension, so too is the "indebted person" here a figure for all of us not in the creditor class—if not those in it as well, given the susceptibility of global markets to sudden, systemic collapse.

Though the most obvious political manifestation of the crisis would seem to be, at first blush, the resurgent nativism of the Right—said to hold particular appeal among the so-called "white working class," if the diagnoses issued by the liberal commentariat are taken at face value—in actual fact no one is (so to speak) immune: indeed, the fantasy of *Surrogates* is nothing if not a fantasy of the relatively privileged, and it is this class also for whom the broadly caricatured Trump voter emerges from the proverbial woodwork, from the darkest corners of the Internet and Appalachia alike. It is also this "urban," "liberal" class for whom apps like "SketchFactor" and "Ghetto Tracker" were developed, to help them steer clear of inner city neighborhoods (the latter was renamed "Good Part of Town" following accusations of racism). That the Right has no monopoly on the trope of contagion is perhaps nowhere better illustrated, in recent popular culture, than in the darkly satirical early episodes of *American Horror Story: Cult*, in which a white, middle-class, lesbian couple find their insular world breached, following Trump's election, by a baffling coalition of murderous alt-righters and grotesque, terrifying clowns.[65]

The disarticulation of community from immunity has, it might be said, reached an intolerable extreme. While it is increasingly hard to tell whether the attendant crisis will resolve itself in "business as usual" or something altogether different, we can nonetheless discern from the overall structure of feeling and its popular mediations the extent of that crisis, its depth, and the intensity of its grip on lived experience. One can only hope that whatever lies on the other side allows us to reinvigorate debt as an ethico-political rather than a power relation, and immunity as the introjection of otherness rather than the feverish and futile erection of barriers against it.

Notes

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Bio



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Vital Forces: Marx and the Tension of Capitalist Affect

John McMahon

ABSTRACT This article juxtaposes Marx's critique of capitalism with recent developments in affect theory. My central argument is that a critique of the tension of capitalist affect is fundamental to a Marxian account of capital: on the one hand, capitalism amplifies the potential affective capacity of bodies through its development and organization of productive forces; on the other, it captures this increase to enrich the bourgeoisie, immiserate the proletariat, and reproduce capitalism. I also sketch the ways that an affective interpretation can provide insight into anti-capitalism resistance and post-capitalist life within Marx's theoretical and philosophical project. Ultimately, reading Marx's critique of capitalism for its resonances with Deleuzean-Spinozan affect theory not only generates a newfound apprehension of the affective register of that critique, but also adds to the critical repertoire of affect theory.

> ". . . [E]xperience shows to the intelligent observer how rapidly and firmly capitalist production has seized the vital forces of the people at their very roots." [1]

Introduction: Reading Marx Affectively

Given the centrality of Marx to cultural studies[2] and the prominence of affect theories in recent cultural studies[3]—not to mention work that brings together Marxism and the study of affect and feeling[4]—it is imperative to consider more directly the resonances between Marx's work and affect theory itself. This article argues for reading Marx's analysis as an affective critique of capital that amplifies his accounts of alienation, the appropriation of surplus labor, oppressive factory conditions, and other dimensions of what we conventionally understand to be part of his project. If we theorize central Marxian concepts in relation to affect theory, what features of Marx's project are made uniquely legible? What distinctive concepts and critical articulations emerge from an affective reading of Marx's critique? What is capitalist affect? How could an affective reading of Marx transform cultural studies and related fields such as political theory and critical theory?

I explore these questions and more by juxtaposing Marx with a mode of affect theory emerging from the work of Baruch Spinoza and Gilles Deleuze, in order to claim Marx as a proto-affect theorist analyzing the capacities of bodies for affecting and being affected in a way that anticipates—and thus offers generative potential contributions for—cultural studies and other endeavors currently engaged with questions of affect. My central argument is that a critique of the tension of capitalist affect is fundamental to a Marxian account of capital: on the one hand, capitalism amplifies the potential affective capacity of bodies through its development and organization of productive forces; on the other, it

captures this increase in affective capacity to enrich the bourgeoisie, immiserate the proletariat, and reproduce capitalism. That is, I contend that for Marx (once read through Spinoza and Deleuze), capitalism produces not only particular relations, ideologies, subjects, and so on, but also produces an intensification and then appropriation of affective capacity.

Kathi Weeks, in her generative book on post- and anti-work imaginaries, insists that we pay attention to the capitalist domination of the worker in terms of more than just a "quantitative" logic of exploitation; instead, domination must also "be grasped in qualitative terms, as attitude, affect, feeling, and symbolic exchange."[5] This article takes on this task through a return to Marx himself, deploying affect theory to think through Marx's theoretical project in a way that focuses on affective relations of domination. I also put into practice Jean-François Lyotard's enthusiastic declaration that "we must come to take Marx as if he were a writer, an author full of affects," as he charges readers to "show what intensities are lodged in theoretical signs, what affects within serious discourse" since there are "intensities that haunt Marx's thought."."[6] Staging an encounter between Marx and Spinozan-Deleuzean affect theory, I trace the affectivities, forces, powers, capacities, and intensities that traverse Marx's works. Such a reading indicates that Marx is indeed a thinker full of affects, enabling a re-articulation of Marx in affective terms and an expanded critical Marxist repertoire for affect theory and cultural studies. Building upon other projects taking up Marx and affect in some way, I suggest that Marx himself can and should be a resource in affect theory's critical repertoire, given the incisiveness of his attunement to affect that I elucidate throughout the article.[7] In examining the relationship between Marx and Spinoza, Yirmiyahu Yovel argues that the "scholastic bulk of" the volumes of *Capital* can be articulated as "Marx's own way, following Spinoza, of discussing ethical vision and powerful human aspirations as if they were points, lines, and bodies," replacing Spinoza's "*mos geometricus*" with "economic analysis."[8] Juxtaposing Marx's critique of capital with affect theory across the one hundred and fifty-odd years between them is what enables this back-and-forth movement.

Such a movement, though, raises a question about what precisely an *affective reading* of Marx entails. I take a cue from Sara Ahmed's motivating gesture in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, in the way she insists we ask the question "'what do emotions do,'" because rather than thinking of "emotion as being 'in' texts" that we can go find or not find in some way, the "emotionality of texts" consists in "how texts are 'moving', or how they generate effects."[9] While this article engages the register of affect instead of emotion, I follow a similar impulse in which the imperative questions to ask are: what might affect do in (and do to) Marx's theorizing of capitalism?; what effects does an affective interpretation generate?; and how might Marx's texts themselves move once animated by affect theory? Eve Kosofky Sedgwick's introduction to *Touching Feeling* presents an additional impetus at the level of reading practices in her argument for reading "beside" as a way of doing theoretically informed textual interpretation. Reading "beside" facilitates the interaction of multiple potentially-heterogeneous elements in a way that eschews "linear logics," "dualistic thinking," the "hermeneutics of suspicion," and the "fantasy of metonymically egalitarian relations . . . between texts and concepts."[10] As such, my reading seeks to put (affective) concepts beside (Marx's) texts to work through the complex relations and track the suggestive resonances between them, that is, to ask what effects affect theory generates alongside Marx's critique of capital.

Finally, I take these catalysts for my own reading and interpretive practices and put them in practice with Lauren Berlant's discussion of affect, "cultural Marxism," and the historical novel.[11] For her, a cultural Marxist analysis engages the historical novel as putting forth "a locus of affective situations that . . . exemplify political and subjective formations," where

affect becomes "the very material of historical embeddedness," all opening the possibility for an "affectivity of the historical present relayed by an aesthetic transmission."[12] It thus works as "the aesthetic expression of an affective epistemology" and can "point to a converging unity of experience in an ongoing moment that could later be called epochal but that at the time marked a shared nervous system that it was the novelist's project to put out there for readers."[13] I suggest that we read Marx himself as, if not as the novelist expressing the aesthetics of epochal affective experience and epistemology,[14] then as the theorist expressing the laws of motion of epochal capitalist affective experience and structures. In my reading below, he theorizes the affective situation exemplifying the capitalist formation that saturates the experiences of laboring subjects in a particular sort of account of the shared nervous system of capitalist affect. It is not only Raymond Williams, Fredric Jameson, György Lukács, or Benedict Anderson—the cultural Marxists who Berlant points to as exemplars of the analysis of the affectivity of the historical novel—but, I argue, also Marx himself who "enables us to think about being in history as a densely corporeal" phenomenon and to "provid[e] us with an account of the matter of affect as key to reading the historical present."[15] It is an affective reading, putting affect theory beside Marx's texts and asking what affect theory does to Marx, that I claim opens up this dimension of Marx's work.

Marx, Affect Theory, and Materialism

In this essay, I work with a Spinozan-Deleuzean trajectory of affect theory.[16] In Deleuze's rendering, Spinoza theorizes bodies in terms of capacity to affect and to be affected (Spinoza's *affectus*), such that bodies interact in encounters that can increase or decrease this capacity (this change in capacity is Spinoza's *affectio*).[17] For Deleuze and Felix Guattari, these Spinozan concepts give rise to a definition of the body as "the sum total of the material elements belonging to it under given relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness" and "the sum total of the intensive affects it is capable of at a given power or degree of potential."[18] Deleuze describes how for Spinoza the "individual" is:

> first of all a singular essence, which is to say, a degree of power. A characteristic relation corresponds to this essence, and a certain capacity for being affected corresponds to this degree of power. [. . .] Thus, animals are defined less by the abstract notions of genus and species than by a capacity for being affected, by the affections for which they are 'capable,' by the excitations to which they react within the limits of their capacity.[19]

That is, for Deleuze's Spinoza, we must define individuals by their characteristic relations and essential power. As such, "all power [*potentia*] is inseparable from a capacity for being affected."[20] In a more recent elaboration of this mode of affect theory, Patricia T. Clough conceptualizes affect as "pre-individual bodily forces augmenting or diminishing a body's capacity to act."[21] This is always a relational notion, for one's capacity to affect and be affected and own affections of which they are capable shape the potential kinds of compositions of bodies and things that may be possible. Consequently, the effects of any composition of individual(s) and object(s) are constituted by the affective capacities of those individuals and objects. A Deleuzean-Spinozan affect theory approaches these kinds of interactions similarly: things "act differently according to the objects encountered" and respond by way of "the affections that come from the objects."[22] It is this general Deleuzean-Spinozan notion, the capacities of bodies to affect and be affected, to act and be acted upon, that becomes the basis for my interpretation of Marx's theory of capitalist affect.

Why, though, pursue this particular Deleuzean-Spinozan mode of affect theory, rather than the many other possible affective routings? Marx read Spinoza in 1841, specifically

the *Theologico-Political Treatise* and some of Spinoza's correspondences.[23] Yovel makes the argument that most readers have systematically underappreciated the Spinozism of Marx, contending that Marx "used Spinoza's thought far more than he admitted" while making sparse direct reference; even then, Yovel argues "Spinoza is almost always present in Marx's thought" in a way that "surpasses his direct mention by name" and "underlies the texture of Marx's thought."[24] He sees Marx as reorienting a Spinozan philosophy of immanence in a more economic and dialectical way.[25]

Althusser makes several references to Spinoza vis-à-vis Marx in his contributions to *Reading Capital*, and Warren Montag notes in his preface to Étienne Balibar's *Spinoza and Politics* that Western Marxists have often turned to Spinoza in times of "crisis within Marxism."[26] The most prominent of the contemporary "Spinozist Marxists" are Hardt and Negri, who, for instance, emphasize Spinozan power and the joyful affects in their theorizing of the revolutionary multitude in their *Empire* trilogy.[27] Frédéric Lordon seeks to use Spinoza to answer a question that constitutes for him a "gap" in Marx, especially important for contemporary capitalism: how do "a few—we call them bosses—have the 'power' to convince the many to adopt their employers' desires as if they were their own and to occupy themselves in their service?"[28] Matthew S. May reads Marx and Spinoza alongside one another to theorize class struggle and the politics of refusal. [29] Given this genealogy, it should not be surprising that I too turn to Spinoza to think with Marx, and more specifically, the Spinoza present in contemporary affect theory transmitted through Deleuze. While these and other readers of Marx examine these resonances with Spinoza, I go further in connecting the two by conceptualizing Marx as an affect theorist in his own right, finding the Deleuzean-Spinozan concept of affect that I find most generative for thinking through Marx's affective critique of capital.

In making this move, I contest recent readings of Marx and his materialism in critical theory. Jason Edwards argues that if materialisms are "philosophical doctrine[s] that concern the nature and multiform manifestations of matter," they should have "little to do with historical materialism as an approach to social and political analysis"; in his reading, most attempts to "import into Marxism philosophical conceptions of materialism" have "proven wanting," unable to apprehend the "systemic" "reproduction of modern capitalist societies" or "social and political…institutions, practices, and trajectories."[30] Defining "philosophical" materialisms out of historical materialism, he contends, enables a more critical perspective on everyday practices and lived space, particularly in their relations with larger-scale systems. However, I would contend that *without* some account of affective materiality, any historical materialist attempt to grasp the "dense but open totality of material practices that constitute and reproduce a given social formation" proves ineffectual.[31] That is, for a historical materialism lacking something like a Deleuzean-Spinozan-Marxian materialism, a wide set of practices and their bodily effects will always remain inaccessible. My reading of Marx thus works to bridge this possible gap between philosophical/theoretical materialisms and Marxist historical materialism.

Pheng Cheah confronts Marx's "dialectical materialism" with materialisms from Derrida and Deleuze. His account of Marxist materialism emphasizes it as rational and law-governed, explicable through "empirical science" and focuses on "material reality" as "produced by negativity," the negation of "given reality or matter" and "imposition of a purposive form" by humans.[32] This rendering of Marx is then contrasted with Derrida's critique of presence and deconstructive emphasis on radical alterity as well as Deleuze's ontology of difference and account of the virtual. He classifies these as non-dialectical materialisms that deny the "primacy of the negative" at work in Marx.[33] My own reading of Marxist materialism makes the affective generativity of interactive capacities—*not* negativity on its own—the crucial movement in Marx's ontology and method. Instead of

power as that which "reside[s] in the form of the human subject as the negation of mere matter that nature gives us," I offer a reading of Marx where power involves the ability to act *and* be acted upon.[34] I thus open Marx up to what Cheah refers to as the generativity and affirmation of these non-dialectical materialisms. There are, to be sure, still differences between even this affective materialism and the Derridean deconstructive materialism Cheah outlines, although not nearly as much as when he limits Marx's materialism to dialectical negation. More importantly for my purposes, my reading more deeply orients Marx to Cheah's account of Deleuze, for whom matter entails "dynamism consisting of speeds and intensities that open up the composition of any individual being, putting it into different connections with other particles, thereby leading to its recomposition."[35] I move Marx in this direction through Deleuze's Spinoza, making Marx's matter more about intensities and forces that are then organized as compositions that enter intro relations with other compositions.

In doing so, I mobilize Deleuze's materialism in an explicitly political direction by bringing it together with the critical power of Marx's project. Indeed, Cheah ends the essay by noting that the political implications of Derrida's and Deleuze's materialisms are difficult to trace. Reading Marx together with Deleuze and Spinoza for an affective Marxist materialism as the rest of this article unfolds will make explicit one mode of politicizing the more radical "force of materiality."[36] Approaching Marx without attending to affect thwarts one from ever opening up this register of vitality in his work. A reading emphasizing affect ensures against reducing Marx's materialism to an inert mechanism or an overly abstract vitalism, and most importantly opens up new possibilities for Marxist critiques of capitalism in affect theory and cultural studies.

Marx's Affect Theory of Labor[37]

The material conditions in which the body is enmeshed limit its essential powers, and the body-as-affective-capacity does not exist in the same configuration transhistorically, but instead varies in its capacities as well as its expressions and relations of that capacity in response to changing material conditions. The powers of different kinds of bodies in a feudalist social formation will differ from those bodies under capitalism, and both will vary in relation to communist bodies, while the gendering, racialization, sexing, and colonizing of bodies shapes their vital capacities and the way the social and cultural worlds take up those capacities. A Deleuzean-Spinozan reading of Marx directs us to examining the particular configuration and relations of affective capacity of bodies in different epochs, and of course in capitalism most prominently.

When we read Marx affectively, the reach of his critique of capitalism expands. I argue that an affective reading of Marx should lead us to consider a feature of his project beyond our conventional understanding of his critique of alienation, the appropriation of surplus labor, oppressive factory conditions, and so on. In my reading, not only does Marx condemn capitalism for the alienation and exploitation it engenders, but he also identifies and critiques what I will call the tension of capitalist affect. My contention emerges from a close reading, incited by Spinoza and Deleuze, of the linked recurring concepts of living labour, labor power, living labor capacity, vitality/vital forces, and capacity more broadly, primarily as Marx mobilizes them in the *Grundrisse* and the first volume of *Capital*. This cluster of related terms expresses a creative, productive force, and I argue that Marx's account of labor and capitalism can be read as an account of affective capacity. In this register, concepts such as living labor capacity or vital forces become capacities to affect (to create, to give form, to valorize, to give power to, to transfer capacity, to actualize in the produced object, and so on) and to be affected (to enter into relations with the product of labor, with other laborers, with the process of production, and to be changed by these relations). Deleuze's Spinoza seeks to define an individual not in terms of a static

classification scheme, but by "the affects of which it is capable," its "affective capacity," the "capacities for affecting and being affected."[38] When we situate this conception on the same plane with Marx's account, I argue we open the way to read the laboring body—in its living labor capacity and vital forces, especially in the interaction of these capacities with other bodies, with capitalist social formations, and so on—as an affective body, and thus enliven Marx's critique of capitalism.

My approach resonates with Catherine Chaput's affective reading of Marx, where she mobilizes a concept of the transmission of affect in relation to Marx's theory of value in order to examine reality television.[39] I also make a similar move to that of May, who works with Spinozan affect to theorize labor power as "an anonymous aggregate of capacities activated in the process of the production of use-values," although I present a sustained account of this in terms of Marx's critique of capital, where May turns to think about labor power as a "surplus" that can underpin class struggle.[40] Finally, I seek to rearticulate the project posed by Marxist feminist Rosemary Hennessy, but in the affective domain. Hennessy contends that we must follow the "relationships of exploitation, domination, and acquisitiveness" as the "kernel" of capital through the ways it "imposes its logic at every 'level' of society."[41] My own reading of Marx's critique explores how these relations impose themselves at the affective level of society.

An affective reading of Marx also turns the insights of Patricia Clough, Greg Goldberg, Rachel Schiff, Aaron Weeks, and Craig Willse back onto Marx himself.[42] While their "Notes Towards a Theory of Affect-Itself" contrasts affect theory with Marx's labor theory of value and emphasis on the "body-as-organism," the critical emphasis of their project merits engagement with Marx's own texts. The political question their intervention provokes, they argue, is that capitalist "exploitation must be measured along with oppression, domination, mistreatment and misrecognition as matters of affective capacity, a politics of the differential distribution among populations of capacities for living."[43] I argue that we can read such a critical encounter with capitalism in Marx himself. Even if the affectivity, in Clough et al.'s sense, of Marx's own account is to some extent limited by his emphasis on the human body, he deeply engages the challenge they posit of "speculat[ing] about the ways in which capital is setting out a domain of investment and accumulation" in terms of affect.[44] He sharply theorizes exploitation in capitalism as a redirection and seizure of affective capacity that appropriates the capacity for living from the population of the proletariat to the bourgeoisie. Clough et al. generatively "reconceptualize labor power in relation to affectivity";[45] it is possible and important that an affective reading of Marx can create a similar rethinking such that labor power in Marx's texts themselves works in the affective register.

Marx regularly depicts labor power in an abstract sense in terms of bodily capacity. In a general relation to capital, "labour is the merely abstract form . . . which exists only as a capacity, as a resource in the bodiliness of the worker."[46] Labor power that is "present in time" in a form that will "form the opposite pole to capital" is "*value-creating, productive labour*" and "can be present only in the *living subject*, in which it exists as capacity, as possibility."[47] That which encounters capital becomes a capacity emanating from the body. Labor-as-capacity situates Marx on a plane with Spinoza's Deleuze. Marx does not define labor or the laboring body in terms of some static essence or inert property; labor is a dynamic, generative potentiality. What does this labor capacity do? It moves, creates, actualizes, affects, and is affected. When it comes into "contact with capital" as well as means and relations of production, it is "made into a real activity" and "becomes a really value-positing, productive activity."[48] Labor capacity acts: it is the subjective "activity . . . as the *living source* of value" and "*general possibility* of wealth."[49]

Labor capacity flows through bodies and relations as a potential power and interacts with other materialities. It is transformed by these interactions, turned as it is into real productive labor and depleted through the activity of laboring. This capacity also transforms those materials through its creative, value-giving power. We can read labor as affective capacity especially in Marx's account of the absorption of labor by capital in the production process. In "being employed," labor transforms the "raw material" of production by being "materialized" as a "modification of the object" that also "modifies its own form."[50] Here, labor capacity in its actualization affects the material and the labor process. Living labor is also affected by the raw material and by the laboring process. Once "set into motion," labour capacity is "expended" in the form of "the worker's muscular force etc." such that the worker "exhausts himself."[51] In this instance labor capacity is used up in its encounter with material and labour process, and the body it flows through becomes tired and needful of replenishment. That is to say, it affects and is affected, with its powers and capacities constantly reconfigured and reshaped due to its life in a capitalist formation.

The Critique of Capitalist Affect

Once we read Marx in terms of Deleuzean-Spinozan affect and theorize the body and labor capacity in terms of affective capacity, we articulate new zones of Marx's critique of capitalism. On the one hand, capitalism amplifies the potential affective capacity—understood as the capacity to affect and be affected—of bodies and things through its development and organization of productive forces; on the other, capitalism transforms this increase in productive forces so that it enriches the bourgeoisie while immiserating the proletariat and reproducing capitalism. The amplified force of the laboring body and of the machine is productive, and it affects and is affected by other bodies and machines. Indeed, it does so for Marx to a greater extent under capitalism than at any other point in history. Capitalists, however, redirect these intensified forces and powers for their own enrichment and increased power, while systematically depriving the laboring body of its real capacity to affect and be affected. In "striv[ing] toward the universal development" of productive forces, capital creates the *potential conditions* for bodies and machines to engage in mutual, affectively enriching encounters.[52] In actuality, it seizes this potential for its own perpetuation. Capitalism seizes the vital forces of the affective, material, laboring body, and this constitutes the central injustice of what I argue is Marx's critique of capitalist affect.

Marx, of course, demonstrated a clear awareness of capitalism's world-historical power; his ruthless criticism involves a deep apprehension of the revolutionary force engendered by capitalist formations. This extends to his account of affective capacity under capitalism, which exhibits both an appreciation of the way capitalism amplifies affective capacity and a sharp critique of the capture of affective capacity for a select few. This capture dominates the many and deprives them of the potentially-increased force that capitalism develops.[53] The particular level and configuration of forces involved in labor are constituted historically: all "*natural forces of social labour*" are "historical products."[54] The affective capacity in one social system will differ from that of another epoch. The social formation of capital, in its "universalizing tendency," "strives towards the universal development of the forces of production."[55] In my reading, it seeks to organize bodies and materials such that productive capacity can be maximized: capitalism aims at, and to some extent enacts, a mass amplification of the capacity to affect and be affected.

Deleuze and Guattari theorize that capitalism "brings about the decoding of the flows that the other social formations coded and overcoded," but "it substitutes for the codes an extremely rigid axiomatic that maintains the energy of the flows in a bound state on the body of capital."[56] My own reading of Marx clarifies this sort of articulation of capitalism:

the decoding of flows becomes the amplification and proliferation of affective capacity, while the rigid capitalist axiomatic binding energies becomes the redirection and capture of that capacity for the reproduction of capitalist social formation. By combining labor, developing powers, constantly expanding, and so on, capitalism generates this continual dynamic regeneration of affective capacity in order to perpetuate itself. In constantly encountering and seeking to further displace barriers to its own development and reproduction, capital requires an ever-increasing capture of affect. It "tear[s] down all the barriers which hem in the development of . . . exploitation and exchange of natural and mental forces."[57] Capitalism needs labor to be more efficient—to affect and be affected at an ever-increasing rate—if it is to extract more surplus labor and thus reproduce and expand. It needs the creative power of labor capacity to be directed at the creation of goods for capitalist circulation. It requires situating many workers and their capacities together in the same spatial and temporal site to overcome the limits of the working day. Generally, capital "*is productive*" as "*an essential relation for the development of the social productive forces*" and it "incessantly whips onward with its unlimited mania" the "development of the productive powers of labour."[58] Capitalism does not only produce particular social and economic relations, or particular forms of ideology, or specific types of worker-subjects, but also directly produces an intensification of affective capacity.

The very "concept of capital" contains "the concentration of many living labour capacities."[59] Viewed as a general society-wide formation, it demands an amplification of these forces directed to its own reproduction and expansion. Capital does more than this, however; it also comes to posit itself as the exclusive agent conducting this power. In doing so it conceals the actual bodies generating and actualizing these forces as well as the effects on these bodies of capitalist processes. All the "social powers of production are productive powers of capital," and the "collective power of labour" becomes "the *collective power* of capital."[60] Capitalist processes collectivize and increase affective capacity in a particular mode of production, then put it to work for the benefit of capitalists and the extension of capitalism, but in a way such that capitalism itself appears as the bearer of this power. The individual body realizes the capacity of living labor, but capitalism seizes this force as its own. By placing a mass of workers in the same location and compelling them to work toward the same end and in the same production process, "capital appears as the collective force of the workers, their social force, as well as that which ties them together, and hence as the unity which creates this force."[61] In the process of amplifying affective capacity, capital comes to posit itself as the vehicle for and unifying energy behind this collective force. Doing this renders the actual forces themselves—those of laboring bodies—invisible in an affective form of fetishism. By standing in as the representation and unity of concentrated forces that in in reality results from an actualization of labor capacities in the form of exploited, alienated laboring bodies, capitalism conceals the fact that the amplification of overall or total capacity it engenders also directly enervates and destroys the very bodies from which this affective capacity was extracted and realized for profit and further growth.

Upon this reading, alienation in Marx's works takes on a particularly affective character, as a force that confronts and opposes the laborer: capitalism alienates the worker from their material affective capacity, then opposes a warped affective force against the worker. As a result of the division of labor, a laborer's "own deed"—read: actualization of affective capacity—"becomes an alien power opposed to him"; the combined efforts of laborers comprise a "social power" that "appears to these individual[s] … not as their own united power, but as alien force existing outside them" that becomes "the prime governor" of human "will and action."[62] The language used by Marx in the *1844 Manuscripts* consistently depicts alienation in terms of external force, marking it as "an alien object exercising power," in terms of the "product of labor;" an "alien activity not belonging to"

the worker when it comes to the "act of production;" and a "being *alien* to him" when discussing species-being.[63] Similar formulations persist in the later Marx: for example, in the *Grundrisse*, the "product of labour . . . endowed by living labour" becomes "an *alien property*" and "labour in general . . . *comes* to confront the worker as an *alien power*."[64] This external force confronts the worker and drains them of affective capacity. Alienated labor is "*external* to the worker" in a way that, instead of "develop[ing] freely his physical and mental energy," "mortifies his body."[65]

Alienation thus describes in some ways the embodied experience of the worker in capitalism subject to the seizure or redirection of their affective capacity. Not only do social relations and productive processes capture the ability to act and be acted upon, this process on a mass scale poses an affective force against the worker that enervates their own capacity. As Sara Ahmed notes, alienation in Marx is both alienation vis-à-vis labor in "a kind of self-estrangement" *and* is "a feeling-structure, a form of suffering that shapes how the worker inhabits the world" given that "the world they have created is an extension of themselves . . . that is appropriated.[66] For Marx, the "collisions" between individuals "produce an alien power standing above them," a "process and power independent of them."[67] The worker puts their life—their dynamic mattering, material productive force—into labor, but this results in confrontation with an alien force. Living labour capacity becomes separated from "its own labour," "alien to it"; as a result, it "has become poorer by the life forces expended" and transferred to the alien product, process, and force.[68] Alienated labor means that instead of the laboring body realizing its capacity or power, labor wrests and appropriates this affective force in a way that both lessens the capacity of that body and poses as a warped, confrontational alien power against it. The "social relation of individuals to one another" has become, in a perversion of the potentiality and relational connectivity of affective force, a "power over the individuals which has become autonomous" of them.[69] Marx's account of alienation, like his broader critique of capitalism, centrally engages and works through the dynamics of affect. In the "production process of capital," labor "appears just as subservient to and led by an alien will and an alien intelligence" in the form of an "*animated monster*."[70] This alien(ation) monster, like the capital-as-vampire figure below, feeds on affective capacity.

It is in these many senses of capitalist affect that, as marked in the epigraph from *Capital* that opens this article, "capitalist production" has "rapidly and firmly…seized the vital forces of the people at their very roots."[71] When Marx makes this claim, we should read it affectively. Vital forces are not (or at least not only) metaphorical, nor does the statement refer exclusively to the way capitalism oppresses the proletariat (although it certainly does that). Capitalism captures the essential powers of individual bodies, their capacity to affect and be affected; it is the usurpation of creative, generative, affective force. It makes labor capacity a force for capital alone. We might thus say that one defining characteristic of the proletariat as a class is its particular mode of enmeshment in these capitalist affective flows. That is, one component of the class status or process of the proletariat is that one's affective capacities are amplified, but this power is captured for the reproduction of capital and enrichment of another affective class at the expense of one's own body. The worker becomes "nothing other than labour-power for the duration of [their] whole life," directing all the worker's time and activity—education, intellectual development, sleep, social intercourse, the "free play of the vital forces" of "body and mind," and so on—to the "self-valorization of capital."[72] Capitalism is affective and cannot exist outside of the concomitant intensification and redirection of capacity.

When capital and labor encounter one another under conditions of capitalism, capital "buys [labour] as living labour, as the general productive force," while the worker sells their labor and thus "surrenders its *creative power*."[73] In this exchange, the creative

power of labor capacity "establishes itself as the power of capital," and "capital appropriates [labour as productive force], as such."[74] The buying and selling of labor power is also the appropriation by capital of affective capacity. The purchase by capital is a procurement of the worker's "vitality," the "objectified labour contained in his vital forces"; capital "realizes itself through the *appropriation of alien*" living labour capacity.[75] It depends on this affective capture for its own perpetuation. Consequently, "every increase in the powers of social production . . . the *productive power of labour itself*"—and as I have discussed, this increase is something required and continually produced by capitalism—"enriches not the worker but rather *capital*; hence it only magnifies again the power dominating over labour; increases only the productive power of capital."[76] Cheah, without making recourse to affect theory, argues that capital "appropriate[s] the source of life," by "parasitically draining the life and labor" in a way that "trausmute[s] capital into a vital being." [77] Affect helps to explain how this process works. Any amplification of affective capacity accrues to capital at the expense of the worker, and any increase in the power of the worker increases the power of capital and its domination of labor. Capitalist processes appropriate the worker's vital forces and essential powers. As Negri contends, "Capital can only subtract life, can only mortify labor."[78] If we read Marx across his works as exploring the relationships of economic and social power, then we must theorize this affective component of that power that I have elucidated. Ultimately, the "natural animating power of labour…becomes a *power of capital*, not of labour."[79] Capitalism seizes the "value-creating possibility . . . which lies within" the laboring body and becomes "master over living labour capacity."[80] It engages in the constant capture of affective capacity, and this constitutes a central mode of Marx's critique of capital in my reading.

Sean Grattan argues that much of Spinozist Marxism—especially that of Negri, writing with and without Hardt—effaces the way that affect is not only joyful encounters or increases in the power to act; Spinoza also carefully theorizes the ways that encounters may be and often are harmful and diminishing of the power to act.[81] The problem is that avoiding the possibility of harmful or sad encounters, or erasing them from one's theory, as Grattan asserts Spinozist Marxism too often does, cannot in fact rid the world of sad affects and harmful encounters. Instead, because they are part of existence, "coming to terms with potential causes of sad affects is crucial to critical practice.[82] This is one of the reasons that I find it so necessary to go back to Marx himself in relation to affect and to Spinoza. As I have demonstrated, Marx is perhaps the most incisive critical analyst of the material practices, relations, and conditions that organize life as a series of sad affects and harmful encounters. Ruddick notes that the turn to Spinoza in critical theory has "invigorated a radical ethico-politics of ontology," one "embracing . . . an indwelling, vital, and immanent concept of power as *potentia*" that is "set against a parasitic capitalism."[83] Marx, I contend, provides a uniquely important mode of such theorizing given his vivid articulation of what I have called the tension of capitalist affect. Any affect theory proceeding from Spinoza will benefit from the sort of encounter with Marx that I have elaborated. That is, once we read Marx's critique of capitalism for its resonances with Deleuzean-Spinozan affect, not only do we generate a newfound apprehension of the affective register of that critique, but also add to the critical repertoire of affective approaches in cultural theory.

My reading of Marx also works through some of the tensions between more structural and more affective modes of cultural, political, and social theories, more specifically about the possibility of affect theory being part of structural or quasi-structural analysis. My argument is, in many ways, a structural one, following Marx: capitalism systematically organizes, amplifies, and captures affect, in a way that maps onto Marx's structural theorizing about class positions within capitalism. This is tension with affect theory, for example in the way that Massumi counterposes "cultural theory" focuses on "structure"—

in which he claims "nothing ever happens" and "all eventual permutations are prefigured via self-consistent generative rules"—to affect as a "collapse of structured distinction into intensity, of rules into paradox."[84] In this sense, bringing together affect theory and a structural understanding of Marx becomes quite complicated.

My claim is that an affective reading of Marx can help bridge this divide, even as these tensions remain inextricable. Massumi notes that while "affect is indeed unformed and unstructured . . . it is nevertheless highly organized and effectively analyzable."[85] I understand my reading of Marx to be a quasi-structural analysis of the organization of affect under capitalism at a very general level. Even though affect always exceeds any attempts at containing it, this should not preclude attempts to theorize large-scale political, social, and economic patternings of affective flows. Massumi closes the chapter I have been quoting in this section by claiming that affect has the "ability . . . to produce an economic effect more swiftly than economics itself" and is thus "a real condition, an intrinsic variable of the late capitalist system, as infrastructural as a factory"; affect is maybe even "beyond infrastructural, it is everywhere, in effect."[86] I would argue that affectively returning to Marx provides one important route for taking on the task of analyzing affect as infrastructural to capitalism and a real condition of economic existence. In this sense, this is an analogous approach to that of Williams with his concept of a structure of feeling, as he too works to provide a structural analysis of bodily experience. If I am right that Marx is theorizing capitalism as a social formation that amplifies affective capacities, but at the same times captures it from those actualizing such potentials, then affect is indeed "everywhere, in effect," to use Massumi's phrase. At the same time, I argue that my reading also responds to the critique that work bringing philosophical concepts about materialism into Marx has been unable to understand systemic processes and social totalities.[87] Instead, I find affect theory to be a crucial tool for making legible large-scale processes that are constitutive of capitalism, even if elements of affect theory push against the structural dimensions of that analysis.

Ultimately, capitalism produces a "throng of people . . . made up of generations of stunted, short-lived and rapidly replaced human beings, plucked, so to speak, before they were ripe."[88] In its ongoing need to absorb and put to use labor capacity, capitalist production quickly uses up the forces of the body themselves, "shortening the life of labour-power, in the same way as a greedy farmer snatches more produce from the soil by robbing it of its fertility."[89] Capitalism requires the amplification of affective capacity, but in realizing this necessity it depletes the source from which it seizes that capacity in the first place. Marx intensely describes this depletion of forces and bodies: capitalism "oversteps . . . the merely physical limits of the working day," granting only "the exact amount of torpor essential to the revival of an absolutely exhausted organism" and leaving only "diseased, compulsory and painful" labour-power, "produc[ing] the premature exhaustion and death of this labour-power itself."[90] Perhaps when Marx writes about the "vampire-like" quality of capital, the way it "lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks," we ought to think of capital as the affect vampire, sucking the capacity, force, and power from the depleted bodies it leaves behind.[91]

Toward Communal Affect

Of course, for Marx, Capital "possesses" this "tendency" towards the "free, unobstructed, progressive, and universal development" of productive force, but "since capital is a limited form of production," this tendency "contradicts it and hence drives it towards dissolution."[92] Capitalism initiates a movement of capacities and powers in the direction of their universal development, which would in turn generate real freedom. However, it seeks to halt this movement, appropriating these intensified forces and destroying the

bodies realizing them. This, Marx argues, proves impossible; once unleashed, these affective capacities will work towards their own realization in free conditions, overthrowing the capitalist formation seeking to contain and capture them. In the register of Clough et al.'s "affect-itself," we might call this movement in Marx his recognition of the way that "with each actualization, there remains a virtual remainder of affective potential," the "openness of bodily matter to its own unstable, pre-individual capacities" such that affect works as "potentiality, indeterminate emergence, and creative mutation."[93] If capitalism "produces, above all, its own grave-diggers" then its death is in part affective, and the grave-diggers include the renewed communist force of proletarian affective capacity.[94]

I suggest that theorizing Marx's account of the overcoming of capitalism—and, perhaps more importantly, theorizing agency, organization, and resistance for us, one hundred and fifty-odd years after the publication of the first volume of *Capital*—requires grappling with the affectivity of capitalism and of struggle against capitalism. If my reading is correct such that we should supplement Marx's accounts of exploitation and alienation with one of the contradictions of capitalist affect, then this turn to affect should extend to theorizing anti- and post-capitalisms. To continue along the lines sketched out throughout this article, future work should juxtapose, on the one hand, Spinoza and Deleuze on affect, common notions, the individual, and joyful encounters with, on the other hand, Marx on communism, the Paris Commune, machines, radical politics, and more—as Matthew May has done, thinking through Spinoza, Marx, and class struggle in an affective way.[95] If capitalism systematically amplifies affective capacity and force but redirects this intensified force for its own reproduction while destroying the bodies that actualize such a capacity, then a future communal society would (among other things) coordinate productive activity so that intensified affective capacity and productive force are organized to feed back into the development of individual bodies and the overall cooperative augmentation of the forces of society. The communal society of the future would be one in which, to rephrase Marx and Engels in the *Manifesto*, we shall have an association, in which the free development of affective capacities realized by each is the condition for the free development of affective capacity for all.[96] That is, in communism bodies affect and are affected by other bodies such that their individual and collective powers are continually augmented. This would entail not only the communal direction of the means of production, but also the communal amplifications of affect, force, and capacity.

When we surpass "the limited bourgeois form," we find—in a passage that would be just as at home in Spinoza, or in Deleuze and Guattari—the "universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces," the "absolute working-out of" the "creative potentialities" of human bodies, the "development of all human powers as such the end in itself," and the individual who "strives not to remain something he has become, but is in the absolute movement of becoming."[97] We should, ultimately, read such an expansive vision affectively, especially considering the vivid resonances between Marx and Deleuzean-Spinozan affect that I have traced throughout this essay. What is the communal development and becoming of creative potentialities, capacities, and human powers in themselves, if not a Spinozan ethic where "powers, speeds, and slownesses [are] composed" such that "individuals enter into composition with one another in order to form a higher individual, ad infinitum" and "capacities can compound directly to constitute a more 'intense' capacity or power"?[98] The free development of the individual and the community in Marx is in part a development of affect, constantly raising bodies in their individuality and relationality to higher, more intense capacities and power. From the standpoint of Deleuze and Spinoza, affective capacity is in the end never a matter of the disconnected or atomized body for which another poses a limit or constraint, nor of

"utilizations or captures," but "of sociabilities and communities."[99] The *community* of a post-capitalist Marxist vision would involve a set of affective relations that reciprocally amplify affective capacity, creating sociabilities that mutually enrich individual and collective powers.

An affective reading of Marx alone, however, will be an insufficient critical resource for such a post-capitalist imaginary. Not all bodies circulate, produce, and interact in the same way within the relations and modes of capitalist affect. Gendered, sexed, sexualized, racialized, colonized bodies experience and are constituted by the affective structures of any mode of production in polyvalent ways. That is, there is not a singular capitalist body, proletariat body, or bourgeois body. If the concept of the "the body" becomes too universalized, too singular, too abstract—temptations that are easy to succumb to in theorizing about affect and embodiment, this article included—it is easy to conceal the ways in which bodies are always already multiply gendered, racialized, sexualized, and so forth. There is no guarantee that certain modes of theorizing affect can or necessarily will interrogate these dynamics. While I believe that the affective reading of Marx is a fundamental part of radical critique and world-building one hundred and fifty years after *Capital*, it can only be one problematic aspect of it. Future work should juxtapose an affective reading of Marx with work from women of color feminists, postcolonial and decolonial theorists, Marxist and socialist feminists, queer theorists, and theorists of racial capitalism, particularly in the ways that affect figures into these projects.[100] Only such an expansive project could prefigure a present of resistance or a future of affective community.

Conclusion: Cultural Theory and the Affective Marx

To conclude, I turn to think more directly about what an affective Marx can do for cultural (and social and political) theory and cultural studies, especially considering the prominence of Marx and of affect in cultural studies. Perhaps most notably, an affective reading of Marx constructs another theoretical vector into the analysis of structures of feeling, routed not just through Williams but also through Marx himself. If, for Williams, such inquiry is "talking about . . . specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought," and does so "as a 'structure,'" then a theorization of capitalist affect provides a further analytical resource for interrogating the systematic conditions for affective experience.[101] Williams contends that structures of feeling constitute "a set, with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension . . . which in analysis (though rarely otherwise) has its emergent, connecting, and dominant characteristics, indeed its specific hierarchies." [102] This article has sought to theorize the internal relations of capitalist affect and the way it conditions bodily experiences, in its interlockings, tensions, and hierarchies. Such an affective reading of Marx also works against the tendency Williams identifies of a Marxist "reduction of the social to fixed forms" by thinking through the ways that affect is always potentially in excess of its captures.[103] While this affective reading may not always be able to help think through the way that structures of feeling are "a social experience which is still *in process*, often indeed not yet recognized as social" because of the more structural account I have given, it can enrich the theoretical resources for the more formal elements of felt experience within capitalism formations, by providing a grid of intelligibility for the flows, disruptions, appropriations, potentialities, and channelings of affect [104]

An affective reading of Marx may also supplement or extend—and itself be supplemented by—more fine-grained material analyses. For instance, Peter Stallybrass engages with Marx's coat, both as an example of the commodity-form in the first volume of *Capital* and Marx's own overcoat on its way in and out of pawn, in order to puzzle through the way

that capitalism is both "the most abstract society that has ever existed" and also "a society that consumes ever more concrete human bodies."[105] The coat becomes an exemplar of the commodity as "the abstract 'cell-form' of capitalism," but Stallybrass tracks the material things of Marx and his family in order to insist on these objects as "the materials . . . from which one constructed a life" against the "annihilation of the self" induced by capitalist abstraction and oppression.[106] I would suggest that affect is a significant conceptual resources for tracking both movements Stallybrass concerns himself with: an affective Marx can trace the abstract macro-level structuring patterned by capitalism at the same time it always refers back to the bodies being consumed and destroyed by capitalism.

In a different vein, reconstructing Marx in an affective vein might address problems in Marx's conception of labor identified by Carolyn Steedman in her analysis of English tax law and accounts of the labor performed by domestic servants in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[107] She critiques Marx's (and Adam Smith's) notion of labor for failing to account for the labor done by domestic laborers, because Marx emphasized labor-power as an "abstract capacity or ability" that is realized when it "is congealed, or crystallized, into a thing, or object"; the labor of a domestic worker, because it does not "produce vendible things" in this way, marks "an absence" in Marx's theorizing. Conversely, English tax law did account for the labor of servants in the way it "named a worker's skills and capacities, what he or she *actually did* in the labour of service" as the defining characteristic of labor.[108] My reading of Marx has the potential to reconfigure Marx to be able to more greatly account for the bodily affectively capacities of the laborer in a way that can partially account for the work of servants that Steedman argues a conventional version of Marx's theory of labor fails to recognize. The *general* capacity to affect and be affected is amplified and appropriated by capitalism for both the industrial and domestic worker, even if the *particular* modalities and realizations of that capacity differs greatly between them.[109] Both are subject to and subjected by the tension of capitalist affect, and future work could map out the precise relations between those two different kinds of labor-as-affective-capacity.

A theme emerges from these brief engagements with Williams, Stallybrass, and Steedman: a Spinozan-Deleuzean reading of Marx and affect constitutes a powerful conceptual resource for cultural theory and cultural studies, but must be further articulated and contextualized through fine-grained, materialist analyses of particular configurations of culture, labor, and affect. The theoretical provocation of exploring Marx's critique of capitalist affect must be fleshed out if it is to fully grapple with "specific feelings, specific rhythms . . . [and] specific kinds of sociality," the affect or "material memory . . . literally embodied in the commodity," or the "practical philosophy of the servant's labour." [110] An analysis of the vital forces amplified and then appropriated in the tension of capitalist affect is a vital tool for cultural analysis, and moving forward, its conceptual power must be actualized in engagements with concrete cultural practices. Berlant discusses the Marxist tradition as "offer[ing] multiple ways to engage the affective aspects of class antagonism, labor practices, and a communally generated class feeling that emerges from inhabiting a zone of lived structure."[111] We must add Marx himself to the repertoire of this mode of cultural, social, and political theorizing on affect: he is, I have argued, a foundational theorist of the affectivity of class, labor, structure, oppression, and feeling under capitalism.

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I would like to thank Rosalind Petchesky, Carol Gould, Susan Buck-Morss, Rachel Brown, Joanna Tice Jen, Stefanie A. Jones, and Lindsey Whitmore for thoughtful and incisive feedback on multiple iterations of this essay. I also appreciate the panels and audiences at

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Notes

1. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume One*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 380.
2. For example, Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982); Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).
3. For example, Ann Cvetkovich, "Affect," in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, ed. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler, 2nd ed. (New York and London: NYU Press, 2014), 13–16; Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds., *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010); Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservativism and Postmodern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Steven Shaviro, *Post Cinematic Affect* (Hampshire, UK: Zero Books, 2010).
4. Ann Cvetkovich, *Mixed Feelings: Feminism, Mass Culture, and Victorian Sensationalism* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992), chap. 7; Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, chap. II.9.
5. Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011), 236n11.
6. Jean-François Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, trans. Ian Hamilton Grant (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 95; 103–104.
7. Catherine Chaput, "Affect and Belonging in Late Capitalism: A Speculative Narrative on Reality TV," *International Journal of Communication* 5 (2011): 1–20; Patricia Ticineto Clough et al., "Notes Towards a Theory of Affect-Itself," *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization* 7, no. 1 (2007): 60–77; Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000); Antonio Negri, "Value and Affect," trans. Michael Hardt, *Boundary 2* 26, no. 2 (1999): 77–88; Frédéric Lordon, *Willing Slaves of Capital: Spinoza and Marx on Desire*, trans. Gabriel Ash (London and New York: Verso, 2014).
8. Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics, Volume 2: The Adventures of Immanence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 98.
9. Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 4; 14.
10. Eve Kosofky Sedgwick, "Introduction," in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 7–8. On the "hermeneutics of suspicion," see "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, Or, You're so Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You," in *Touching Feeling*, 123–51.
11. Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 63–69.
12. Ibid., 66–67.
13. Ibid., 64; 66.
14. Although, note that Cvetkovich reads Marx's *Capital* as a kind of Victorian "sensation narrative." Cvetkovich, *Mixed Feelings*, chap. 7.
15. Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 64.
16. On the multiple approaches and orientations to affect theory, see Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, "An Inventory of Shimmers," in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed.

Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 6–8; and Marianne Liljeström, "Affect," in *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 16–38. The works of Patricia T. Clough and Brian Massumi present some of the more prominent contemporary illustrations of this Spinozan-Deleuzean approach in cultural theory: Patricia Ticineto Clough, "The Affective Turn: Political Economy, Biomedia, and Bodies," in *The Affect Theory Reader*, 206–25; Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002).

17. Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988).
18. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 260.
19. Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, 27. Deleuze also writes, " . . . define bodies and thoughts as capacities for affecting and being affected, many things change. You will define an animal, or a human being, not by its form, its organs, and its functions, and not as a subject either; you will define it by the affects of which it is capable. Affective capacity, with a maximum threshold and a minimum threshold, is a constant notion in Spinoza" (124–25).
20. Ibid., 97.
21. Clough, "The Affective Turn," 207.
22. Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, 21.
23. Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics, Volume 2*, 78; Bill Bowring, "What If Ilyenkov Had Known Marx's Transcriptions of Spinoza?," *Al-Farabi* 1, no. 45 (2014): 24–26.
24. *Spinoza and Other Heretics, Volume 2*, 78–79; 200n4. The most prominent citation occurs in the introduction to the *Grundrisse*, where Marx contends that the "identity of production and consumption amounts to Spinoza's thesis: *determinatio est negatio,*" with a footnote referring to a 1674 letter from Spinoza to Jelles. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1973), 90; 90n11.
25. Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics, Volume 2*, chap. 4. Deleuze and Guattari read Spinoza as the foremost philosopher of immanence: "Spinoza, the infinite becoming-philosopher: he showed, drew up, and thought the 'best' plane of immanence—that is, the purest, the one that does not hand itself over to the transcendent or restore any transcendent, the one that inspires the fewest illusions, bad feelings, and erroneous perceptions" *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 60. Notably, one of Althusser's discussions about Marx and Spinoza situate them both as thinkers of a kind of immanence, albeit within Althusser's structuralism. Althusser, *Reading Capital*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 1979), 187–89.
26. Althusser, *Reading Capital*; Warren Montag, "Preface," in *Spinoza and Politics*, by Etienne Balibar (London and New York: Verso, 2008), ix. For instance, Althusser writes that Spinoza and Marx provide the great, "unprecedented theoretical revolution{s}," and in this sense, "from the philosophical standpoint" we "can regard Spinoza as Marx's only direct ancestor."Althusser, *Reading Capital*, 102.
27. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*; *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004); Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambride, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009). Negri has long been a prominent theorist of Spinoza, including his book-length treatment of Spinoza, *The Savage Anomaly: The Power of Spinoza's Metaphysics and Politics*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 1991)., which contains only a few mentions of Marx

but does make the intriguing gesture to a Machiavelli-Spinoza-Marx "vein of thought" that "counters the 'sublime'" tradition of Hobbes-Rousseau-Hegel (265n26).

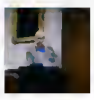
28. Frédéric Lordon, *Willing Slaves of Capital*, x.
29. Matthew S. May, "Spinoza and Class Struggle," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 6, no. 2 (2009): 204–8.
30. Jason Edwards, "The Materialism of Historical Materialism," in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, Politics*, ed. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 281.
31. Ibid., 291.
32. Pheng Cheah, "Non-Dialectical Materialism," in *New Materialisms*, 71.
33. Ibid., 71.
34. Ibid., 79.
35. Ibid., 87.
36. Ibid., 89.
37. Thanks to Alyson Cole for suggesting this phrase to describe my account of affect and Marx's living labor capacity.
38. Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, 124.
39. Chaput, "Affect and Belonging in Late Capitalism."
40. May, "Spinoza and Class Struggle," 205.
41. Rosemary Hennessy, *Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism* (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), 17.
42. Clough et al., "Notes Towards a Theory of Affect-Itself."
43. Ibid., 75.
44. Ibid., 62.
45. Ibid., 62.
46. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 298.
47. Ibid., 272 (emphasis in original). Interestingly, immediately after this formulation in the *Grundrisse*, Marx notes that "this marginal remark is an anticipation, must first be developed, by and by." Even in the text itself, Marx creates openings for lines of flight that he may only anticipate and which need some further development. Clearly, many of these anticipations are taken up and elaborated in the volumes of *Capital*. I seek to explicitly pursue the affective anticipations of such remarks.
48. Ibid., 298.
49. Ibid., 296 (emphasis in original).
50. Ibid., 300.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid., 540.
53. Lordon also discusses capitalist "capture" in terms of affect. Lordon, *Willing Slaves of Capital*, 117–21. He argues that analysis of the employment relation demands a theory of capture which specifies the object of master/employer capture as the "power of acting" of employees so that the "conative energies of others work" in the "service" of the "master-desire" (117). While I think this is generally correct, I disagree with Lordon in his claim that Marx himself does not have a theory of capture in his account of capitalist exploitation. As I demonstrate throughout this section of the article, Marx's critique of capitalism includes a wide-ranging analysis of the capitalist capture of affect, even if he never explicitly names it as such. Part of the problem is that Lordon limits his engagement with Marx at this part of his book to the appropriation of surplus value. What Lordon understands as an "impasse" in Marx is an underappreciation of the potential for an affective theory of exploitation

in Marx himself (120). It would be generative, I think, to read my and Lordon's accounts together to think about the way that the capitalist capture of affect I theorize in Marx works to shape what we might call, using Lordon, the conatus of capitalism itself. If capitalism has a conative impetus to persist in its being, then turning the conatus of workers against themselves and towards the capture of affect that reproduces capitalism and enables it to endure would be crucial.

54. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 400 (emphasis in original).
55. Ibid., 540.
56. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 1983), 245–46.
57. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 410.
58. Ibid., 325 (emphasis in original).
59. Ibid., 590.
60. Ibid., 585 (emphasis in original).
61. Ibid., 587.
62. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, trans. Martin Milligan (New York: Prometheus Books, 1988), 53–54.
63. Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. Martin Milligan (New York: Prometheus Books, 1988), 75–77 (emphasis in original).
64. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 453; 307 (emphasis in original).
65. Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, 74.
66. Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 167. For a different reading of affect and alienation, see Lordon, *Willing Slaves of Capital*.
67. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 197.
68. Ibid., 462.
69. Ibid., 197.
70. Ibid., 470 (emphasis in original)
71. Marx, *Capital, Volume One*, 380.
72. Ibid., 375.
73. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 307 (emphasis in original)
74. Ibid.
75. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 323; 307 (emphasis in original).
76. Ibid., 308 (emphasis in original).
77. Pheng Cheah, *Spectral Nationality: Passages of Freedom from Kant to Postcolonial Literatures of Liberation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 197–98.
78. Cesare Casarino and Antonio Negri, "It's a Powerful Life: A Conversation on Contemporary Philosophy," *Cultural Critique* 57, no. 1 (2004): 180.
79. *Grundrisse*, 357 (emphasis in original).
80. Ibid., 453.
81. Sean Grattan, "The Indignant Multitude: Spinozist Marxism after Empire"," *Mediations* 25, no. 2 (2011): 7–8.
82. Ibid., 7.
83. "The Politics of Affect: Spinoza in the Work of Negri and Deleuze," *Theory, Culture & Society* 27, no. 4 (2010): 24.
84. Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 27. For more on Massumi's critique of structural cultural and social theory, see 68–70.
85. Ibid., 260n3.
86. Ibid., 45.
87. Edwards, "The Materialism of Historical Materialism."
88. Marx, *Capital, Volume One*, 380.

89. Ibid., 376.
90. Ibid., 375–76.
91. Ibid., 342.
92. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 540.
93. Clough et al., "Notes Towards a Theory of Affect-Itself," 65. Also see May, "Spinoza and Class Struggle."
94. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, trans. Friedrich Engels (New York: International Publishers, 1948), 483.
95. May, "Spinoza and Class Struggle."
96. Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 491.
97. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, trans. Samuel Moore, ed. A.J.P. Taylor (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 94.
98. Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, 126.
99. Ibid.
100. To highlight just two generative interventions in these areas, see Colin Patrick Ashley and Michelle Billies, "The Affective Capacity of Blackness," *Subjectivity* 10, no. 1 (2017): 63–88; Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012).
101. Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 132.
102. Ibid.
103. Ibid., 129.
104. Ibid., 132 (emphasis in original).
105. Peter Stallybrass, "Marx's Coat," in *Border Fetishisms: Material Objects in Unstable Spaces*, ed. Patricia Spyer (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), 183.
106. Ibid., 202–3.
107. Carolyn, Steedman, "The Servant's Labour: The Business of Life, England, 1760–1820," *Social History* 29, no. 1 (2004): 1–29.
108. Ibid., 4–7.
109. This is suggestive of an affective reading of Marx recalibrating contemporary scholarship on affective labor in light of a more affective reading of Marx, e.g., Michael Hardt, "Affective Labor," *Boundary 2* 26, no. 2 (1999): 89–100; Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 290–92. This could involve challenging accounts of affective labor that temporalize it in late capitalism, post-Fordist, and/or neoliberal configurations to consider the ways that there is also a kind of affective labor undergone by the industrial worker in the nineteenth century as well, even if the particular affects are qualitatively different than those of the contemporary childcare worker, migrant domestic worker, or Facebook employee, but are nonetheless affective from the standpoint of my interpretation of Marx.
110. Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 133; Stallybrass, "Marx's Coat," 202; Steedman, "The Servant's Labour," 4.
111. Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 64.

Bio



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Marxism, Cultural Studies, and the "Principle Of Historical Specification": On The Form of Historical Time in Conjunctural Analysis

Douglas Spielman

ABSTRACT Karl Korsch identifies in Marx's work what he calls "the principle of historical specification," the way in which "Marx comprehends all things social in terms of a definite historical epoch." This work is concerned with this idea and its instantiation in contemporary social theory. With this paper I hope to show how the principle of historical specification has been interpreted within the Birmingham tradition of cultural studies, paying specific attention to (1) the form of historical time implicit in the concept of a "conjuncture," and (2) the logic of historical periodization that follows from a "conjuncturalist" approach to historical research. I argue that a conception of plural temporality is central to the mode of historical analysis associated with the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies.

In his 1937 essay, "Leading Principles of Marxism," Karl Korsch identifies in Marx's writing what he calls "the principle of historical specification," describing it in this way: "Marx comprehends all things social in terms of a definite historical epoch. He criticizes all the categories of the bourgeois theorists of society in which this specific character has been effaced."[1] In the current work, I am concerned with this idea and its instantiation in contemporary social theory. In what follows, I look at the tradition of cultural studies associated with the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at The University of Birmingham, a tendency that is notable for its emphasis on historical and contextual specificity. With this paper, then, I show how the principle of historical specification has been interpreted within this tradition of cultural studies and draw attention to the theoretical premises that ground this interpretation. Following the work of Stuart Hall and Lawrence Grossberg, I argue that cultural studies not only takes historical specification as a kind of methodological precept, but, more fundamentally, takes historical specificity as itself the primary object of analysis. In presenting this argument, I pay specific attention to (1) the form of historical time implicit in the concept of a "conjuncture" and (2) the logic of historical periodization that follows from a "conjuncturalist" approach to social research.

Among other things, I suggest that cultural studies ought to affirm a notion of temporal multiplicity and reject any straightforwardly historicist account of time (that is, of time as linear, homogenous, and progressive). I argue for this by suggesting that there is a non-arbitrary relation between the abstract structure of a social formation and the form of historical time that is predicated of it. In doing this, I follow Althusser's suggestion that a materialist philosophy of history is broadly committed to the proposition that how social existence is imagined and described conditions (in some strong sense) how history and historical time are imagined and described. In one respect, then, this paper is an attempt

to bring the Althusserian critique of historicism into explicit relation with cultural studies' practice of conjunctural analysis.

This paper is organized in two sections. The first addresses the place of Korsch's "principle of historical specification" in the Marxian tradition, suggesting several ways in which we may recognize readings of Marx that emphasize this principle. The second section focuses directly on theoretical work within cultural studies, especially on the work of Stuart Hall and Lawrence Grossberg. It looks in particular at how the concept of a "conjuncture" provides a theoretical foundation for the radically contextual form of social research associated with this tradition.

1. Marxism and historical specificity: an overview

To foreground the principle of historical specification in one's reading of Marx is, at its most basic, to assert two things:

(1) Marx's analysis is not aimed at uncovering universal laws of social development, but is —to one degree or another—limited in its historical scope. Often this limit is taken to be coterminous with the historical limits of capitalism itself—the presumption being that Marx was fundamentally concerned only with capitalism and that his analysis, therefore, cannot (unless appropriately qualified) explain either pre or post-capitalist social formations.

(2) Not only is Marx's analysis restricted to a particular historical period, but so too are the categories he uses in developing this analysis. In other words, readings that foreground the principle of historical specification claim that the meanings of the basic theoretical categories with which Marx analyzes capitalism (labor, capital, value, the commodity, etc.) are historically specific. The suggestion, then, is that these categories do not express any transhistorical content, but instead represent the particularity of social and economic forms that are operative under capitalism alone. For example, Moishe Postone argues that the category "labor" (at least as it operates in Marx's mature analysis) does not primarily name a transhistorical practice, but instead describes a historically particular form of "social mediation."[2] In Postone's reading, labor is understood as a historically specific activity that constitutes and modulates a unique kind of social interdependence (viz. one in which labor—irrespective of its concrete attributes—functions as a means for making a claim on social wealth). The category, therefore, cannot be unproblematically applied outside of the initial context for which Marx developed it. (We may note in passing that Postone treats the category of "value" similarly: for him, "value" names the historically specific "form of wealth" that corresponds to this function of labor under capitalism.)

In his commentary on Marx's 1857 "Introduction" to the *Grundrisse*, Stuart Hall similarly affirms the historical specificity of Marx's categories. On the category of "production" in Marx's system, Hall writes:

> There is no "production-in-general": only distinct forms of production, specific to time and conditions. [. . .] Since any mode of production depends upon "determinate conditions", there can be no guarantee that those conditions will always be fulfilled, or remain constant or "the same" through time. For example: except in the most common-sense way, there is no scientific form in which the concept, "production", referring to the capitalist mode, and entailing as one of its required conditions, "free labour", can be said to have an "immediate identity" (to be "essentially the same as") production in, say, slave, clan or communal society.[3]

Hall notes that while certain categories may appear transhistorical, they do so only at a very high level of abstraction. At such a level, however, they cease to be useful for developing a rigorous analysis of any particular historical moment. For example, by ignoring the multiplicity of specific determinations that condition the process of production in a given period, the most abstract form of the category (i.e. "production in general") is evacuated of all "scientific" content—it appears as a "common-sense" abstraction that, so conceived, cannot meaningfully contribute to a critical social theory.[4]

Here, however, a qualification must be made. The level of abstraction at which a category is conceived does not in all instances indicate its degree of historical specificity. As both Postone and Hall note, certain categories in Marx's analysis appear more abstract precisely because of their historically specific attributes (or, stated even more directly, the category's abstract character *is* its historically specific attribute).[5] Marx, for example, theorizes labor at a high level of abstraction, but, as Postone has shown, this is not because he set out to conceptualize labor as a transhistorical practice. Rather, the abstract way in which Marx discusses labor is due to the historically particular form that labor assumes under capitalism. The centrality of "abstract labor" in Marx's theory of value—i.e. labor considered independently of its particular sensuous qualities—does not index a commitment to universalizing concepts, but an intellectual response to a historically specific set of social conditions. As Marx puts it in an 1858 letter to Engels, labor (at least as it is considered in his theory of value) is a "historical abstraction," one that is "feasible only when grounded on a specific economic development of society."[6]

Although the concept of an "historical abstraction" does little to specify whether a given abstraction is mental or practical—certainly mental abstractions are also historical, arising in thought under a particular set of historical conditions—Marx holds to the possibility of practical or "real" abstractions which are enacted in social life independently of (and even prior to) their representation in thought.[7] And it is this practical character that, in certain instances, makes it necessary to invert the typical relation between abstract categories and historical specification, opening towards paradoxical moments in which higher theoretical abstractions in fact grasp social relations in a more (rather than less) historically concrete form. Perhaps for this reason, Hall is careful to emphasize that "general production"—as Marx uses the term—is not equivalent to "production-in-general."[8] Where the latter is an empty abstraction that purports to grasp the transhistorical essence of production as such, the former names a historically-determinate real abstraction, one which grasps the *particular* character of production under capitalist conditions, and thus helps to specify what is unique about the present.

Thus far I have suggested that arguments foregrounding the principle of historical specification tend to emphasize both the historical particularity of Marx's object of research (viz. capitalism) and the historical particularity of the individual categories used to analyze that object. It is now possible to add a third element to this list and suggest that these readings of Marx tend to view the principle of historical specification as central to his critical methodology, and, by extension, to his critique of classical political economy. In these readings, much of what Marx rejects in classical economics is its tendency to reify social categories by viewing capitalist social relations as universal and transhistorical. In this interpretation, then, Marx's critical procedure not only involved showing how the theoretical systems developed by the political economists came into contradiction with the conclusions drawn from those systems (a species of immanent critique), but included as well a critique of "bourgeois" historiography. In other words, it included a critique of the tendency among classical economists to transpose specifically capitalist economic forms backwards into history, thereby making capitalist social relations appear to be natural and

inevitable. This is what Hall means when he suggests that classical economy's "ideology is inscribed in its method."[9]

Perhaps for this reason, readings that emphasize historical specification tend to draw more heavily from the *Grundrisse* than from *Capital*. While the former is explicit in its historical criticism of classical political economy, the latter is structured more formally as an immanent critique in which Marx appears to provisionally accept categories as he inherits them from the classical economists in order to show that they reveal attributes of capitalism that would be considered undesirable even according to the economists' own normative criterion (for example, revealing a tendency towards monopoly conditions, hoarding, and economic crisis). As Postone notes, this characteristic of *Capital's* structure can obscure the centrality of historical specification in Marx's work.[10]

I have offered three criteria that might provisionally be said to unite Marxian theories of historical specificity. Although we can find in these certain points of commonality which link the various theorists addressed above, they do not allow us to posit any easy identity between them. Historical specificity is, to put it simply, a relative designation. There is not an absolute threshold after which one is or is not a thinker of historical specification. The theorists addressed here exhibit different degrees of historical specification, with some restricting their focus to more compressed periods of historical time and others (Postone most notably) operating at a more general, or epochal, level. In the remainder of this paper I focus on how cultural studies approaches its commitment to historical specificity and on the broader theoretical implications of this approach.

2. Cultural studies and conjunctural analysis

The object of cultural studies

To understand the significance of historical specificity in cultural studies, it is necessary first to understand its object of research. This, however, is a deceptively complex task. As Lawrence Grossberg has noted, the unique patterns that have characterized the institutional adoption of cultural studies have also made it particularly challenging to define. Indeed, many of the works that have been grouped together under the heading of "cultural studies" share little in common with each other, and little in common with the intellectual project that initially emerged around the CCCS.[11] This diffusion has tended to obfuscate the specificity of cultural studies and of its empirical referent; the result is that cultural studies is often simply equated with the study of popular culture, or, in perhaps a slightly less general variation, the role of popular culture in mediating political identification and resistance. While these latter concerns certainly do feature prominently in work associate with the CCCS, it is not reducible to them. If popular culture has been given a place of prominence in cultural studies then this must be understood as a contingent articulation of the cultural studies project rather than as its essential attribute. As Hall argues in "Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular,'" cultural studies turned to popular culture because, in a particular time and place, it appeared as a key domain in which social struggles were framed and in which political consent was being constructed.[12] Popular culture, however, was not always understood to function in this manner, nor was it understood to constitute the primary referent for cultural studies. On this Grossberg is even more explicit: "too often, people have mistakenly assumed that cultural studies is about culture, while its real concern is always contexts and conjunctures."[13]

As Grossberg's comment makes clear, historical context is not merely "background" to something else—its elucidation is, in other words, not simply a means to grasp some other object. Rather, in this tradition of cultural studies, the aim of both research and writing is

the conceptual reconstruction of a given context as such.[14] As Grossberg writes, "that traditional notion of object of study is only the opening, the point of articulation, through which one enters into the context that is the very object of analysis. This initial object of study must never displace the context as the real object of concern and investigation."[15]

This consideration still leaves open many questions. While the notion of "context" indexes a commitment to historical inquiry, it says nothing of the level of abstraction at which such an inquiry would typically operate within cultural studies. The term "context" is, simply stated, ambiguous with respect to the degree of historical generality it names—"context" may describe a lengthy expanse of historical time, as is the case in Postone's work where the relevant category of historical contextualization is a mode of production, or it may describe the much more limited temporal horizon of a single event. Aware of these difficulties, Grossberg introduces an essential qualification: "If context is the real object of study of cultural studies, that context is generally understood as a conjuncture."[16]

At this point we arrive at perhaps the central concept in this tradition.[17] The remainder of this section, therefore, will address how the concept of a "conjuncture" is understood within cultural studies and how it provides the basis for a theory of historical specification.

On the origin of the concept

Though I will describe the specific features of a conjuncture in more detail below, it is useful to briefly reflect on its history and political implications. While the concept of a "conjuncture" played a role in Lenin's writings on the political situation in Russia, where it described the unusual combination of historical circumstances that gave rise to the revolutionary situation in that country, its most influential treatment is found in Antonio Gramsci's work.[18] In the latter, it satisfies the need for a category of Marxian political analysis that can operate at a level of concretion adequate to the specific circumstances in a given national context. As Hall remarks, while many of Marx's concepts operate at a relatively high level of historical abstraction (which is not to say they are transhistorical), "Gramsci understood that as soon as these concepts have to be applied to specific historical social formations, to particular societies at specific stages in the development of capitalism, the theorist is required to move from the level of 'mode of production' to a lower, more concrete level of application."[19]

For example, in Gramsci's work we may observe how the concept of a "conjuncture" is used to analyze the trajectory of historical development—both economic and political—within Italy in the 1920s and 30s. It is instructive to contrast this with a more "epochal" approach to history. The latter may, at least when carried out on a Marxian basis, describe historical development in terms of a simple contradiction between the forces and relations of production, understanding large expanses of historical time in light of a dialectic between these factors. However, to analyze particular national (and even regional) formations of capitalism, a greater level of historical detail is required, thus we see a multiplication of political and economic categories at the level of the conjuncture.

This categorial multiplication is apparent when we attend to Gramsci's treatment of class power. Instead of speaking simply of a binary class structure—for example, of the bourgeoisie and proletariat—Gramsci describes "historical blocs" composed through the articulation of specific sectors of multiple classes. At the level of the conjuncture, then, political formations are analyzed in terms of temporary alliances between particular class factions, rather than as unified forms of class domination.[20] By way of example, we may follow Gramsci in his assertion that, given the relative underdevelopment of Italy's rural south, the Italian working class could only ascend politically if allied with sections of the peasantry, winning their consent to its critique of capital and the bourgeois state.[21]

The cultural studies concept of "articulation" can function as an analytic tool for describing the formation of historical blocs and their capacity to exercise leadership within a conjuncture. Although this concept is often used more generally to describe the forging of contingent connections between different meanings, practices, and effects—and is perhaps most often used to describe the way discursive entities become associated with particular connotative meanings—it applies equally to the sorts of political affiliations described above. Grossberg, for example, has analyzed the New Right as an uneasy alliance between different groups, some of which have partially contradictory agendas.[22] Hall similarly speaks of class formations being bound together through a process of articulation: "the unity of classes is necessarily complex and has to be—constructed, created, articulated—as a result of specific economic, political, and ideological practices. It can never be taken as automatic or 'given.'"[23]

Here we would note that "hegemony," at least in its Gramscian usage, is a political concept appropriate to an analysis at the level of the conjuncture. That is, it describes a situation in which a particular historical bloc is able to win robust consent to its political and intellectual leadership, both in the sphere of the state and across a diverse ensemble of civil society institutions. The "war of position" is Gramsci's term for this ongoing form of hegemonic struggle. In his usage, the latter is counterpoised to the more punctual strategy of taking state power through a "war of maneuver." In the context of marxist political theory, the Russian experience is in many respects the archetype of the latter. As Hall has noted, Gramsci's political intervention is thus in part an attempt to displace the dominance of the Russian model by elaborating a strategic imaginary adequate to the conditions in industrialized liberal democracies.[24] The conjuncture names the terrain on which this war of position occurs, describing the spatiotemporal context of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic struggles. In this respect, it is a central political category within cultural studies.

The two-fold character of the conjuncture

For analytic purposes, we may begin by suggesting that, within cultural studies, the concept of a conjuncture names two distinct things: it describes both a category of historical periodization *and* a structural arrangement of social elements. In other words, the concept can be understood to indicate a "unit" of historical differentiation—a means of differentiating one time from another, of registering some disjuncture (however partial) between past and present—and to describe the abstract form assumed by a social totality.[25] Indeed, I will suggest below that the second in many ways conditions the first: that the structural attributes of a conjuncture establish the basis for the form of historical time associated with it.

These multiple dimensions can be inferred from Grossberg's tripartite description of conjunctural analysis as an intellectual practice that involves (1) determining "when and how we are/are not moving from one conjuncture to another";[26] (2) evaluating the relations within a conjuncture "between the old and the new"; and (3) accounting for "the articulations within and across [. . .] the dimensions of locations, territories, and regions."[27]

Conjunctural analysis thus requires one to simultaneously register the historical discontinuity *between* conjunctures, evaluate the historical unevenness *within* a given conjuncture (i.e. the nonsynchronicity of its different constituent parts, figured above in terms of a balance between the old and new), and to map the relations between the multiplicity of elements that compose the conjuncture (relations between different locations, actors, institutions, practices, etc.). In this schema, numbers one and two represent the temporal axis of conjunctural analysis (what we might call its historical

dimension), while number three indexes its structural axis (that is, its concern with relations between a multiplicity of differentiated parts and between those parts and the social totality as such). Although it will be addressed more completely below, we should at this point emphasize that conjunctural analysis charts two forms of historical differentiation: the first is the punctuation of historical time by different conjunctural formations, the second is the heterochrony amongst different elements *within* a conjuncture.

In what follows I will address all three aspects of conjunctural analysis outlined by Grossberg. I will, however, work from the third point to the first. This is in part based on the suspicion (one that has been alluded to but not yet substantiated) that each element of Grossberg's tripartite schema finds its logical basis in the subsequent element. That, in other words, the form of relationality associate with a conjuncture (number 3) logically implies a particular concept of historical time (number 2) and that this, in turn, establishes the basis for a certain form of periodization (number 1).

The form of the conjuncture

As they are theorized in cultural studies, conjunctures tend to be understood as relational, contradictory, and transitory. In the most basic sense, a conjuncture describes the confluence—in a particular time and place—of multiple social forces and their temporary stabilization as a "kind of totality," i.e. as a relatively coherent milieu of social practice.[28] As Hall suggests, drawing our attention to the dissonances and contradictions that inhabit any conjuncture, "we should define a conjuncture as the coming together of often distinct though related contradictions, moving according to different tempos, but condensed in the same historical moment."[29]

A "conjuncture" describes a complexly articulated social field in which no single element or region (e.g. "the economy") immediately determines the whole or may be said to constitute its essence. On this point, reference to the Althusserian tradition can be instructive. Althusser's account of the social totality as a "complex whole" with the "unity of a structure articulated in dominance" provides an important theoretical precedent for work within cultural studies.[30] As in Althusser's system, the kind of social whole that constitutes the theoretical object of conjunctural analysis can be counterpoised to a Hegelian concept of totality in which every sphere of social life is reduced to the phenomenal "expression" of a single, essential determination.[31] One will note that this Hegelian formulation in fact depends upon two related assumptions: the first is that the social totality can be reduced to a single governing principle; the second is that this principle is externalized within, and thus expressed by, each individual part of the totality. When theorized along Hegelian lines, therefore, the essence of the whole is immediately legible from within each part, as each is merely the alienated (or externalized) expression of this essence. Thus, while the Hegelian account is able to consider the contextual determination of social elements (i.e. how parts are shaped by their articulation to the whole), it is only able to do so after a prior reduction, or simplification, of that context—that is, after a reduction of the context to a single essential attribute. Althusser will therefore argue, "the *Hegelian totality* is the alienated development of a simple unity, of a simple principle."[32]

In contrast to this, conjunctural analysis posits the existence of a complex whole composed of an irreducible multiplicity of elements whose coherence is not guaranteed by a shared essence. To be clear, however, this multiplicity is not conceived in atomistic terms—that is, a conjuncture does not describe the mere external juxtaposition of otherwise self-sufficient elements. (Were it to do so, it would avoid the pitfalls of the Hegelian conception, but sacrifice any possibility of a strong account of relationality.) It is

assumed instead that the various parts of a conjuncture are themselves shaped by the complete system of relations within which they are embedded; a system that (contra Hegel) must be conceived as nothing more than the series of differential articulations between heterogeneous elements.

Such an understanding does not, we should note, imply that all social forces are equally effective in shaping a conjuncture. On the contrary, effectivity is assumed to be unevenly distributed such that certain institutions and spheres of activity are able to exert a greater influence than others in structuring the articulations between elements in a given historical formation. Critically, these relations of dominance—that is, the differential effectivity of the elements in a conjuncture—are themselves complexly determined within the relational fabric of the conjuncture itself. Therefore, if a certain sphere of activity, for example, popular culture, assumes (at a given moment) an outsized influence in shaping social and political reality—that is, if an increasing number of social questions are being mediated by popular culture, and thus the relations between different practices, institutions, etc. articulated by and through forms of the popular—this is not explicable with reference to something essential in the nature of popular culture itself, but only with respect to the multiplicity of other elements in the social field that have overdetermined it in such a way that it takes on this outsized power. In this regard, conjunctural analysis tends to be broadly committed to a relational ontology in which relations have primacy with respect to their terms.[33] As Grossberg writes: "the identity, significance, and effects of any practice or event [. . .] are defined only by the complex set of relations that surround, interpenetrate, and shape it, and make it what it is."[34]

Temporal multiplicity

Thus far I have been following Grossberg's suggestion that conjunctural analysis has a tripartite structure in which the analyst seeks to account for (1) the historical boundaries of the conjuncture, (2) the nonsynchronicity of the elements within the conjuncture, and (3) the specific relations between elements that compose the conjuncture. I have addressed the third, suggesting—largely by way of a contrast with Hegel—that conjunctural analysis tends to consider the social totality as a complex whole in which the relations between elements determine their specific nature and relative dominance. We can now briefly turn to the question of intra-conjunctural temporal differentiation in order to see how the description of the social totality offered above logically entails the nonsynchronicity of the elements within a conjuncture. That is, how this form of temporal differentiation follows from the account of the social totality as a complexly articulated whole.

For a second time we can draw upon Althusser's work for theoretical guidance. It is Althusser who has perhaps most forcefully defended the idea of a necessary relation between the structure of a social formation and the form of historical time that is associated with it.[35] As he writes, "the structure of the social whole must be strictly interrogated in order to find in it the secret of the conception of history in which the 'development' of this social whole is thought."[36]

It is on the basis of this intrinsic connection between social form and temporality that Althusser is able to extend his critique of the Hegelian notion of "expressive totality" into a critique of Hegel's historicism. The latter, for Althusser, takes as it foundational presupposition the "contemporaneity of time."[37] The historicist conception assumes, in other words, that all parts of the social totality, all of its discreet elements and tendencies, "co-exist in one and the same time" and develop in sync with each other according to a single, homogeneous vector of historical temporality.[38] Key, however, is that this mode of contemporaneity is possible only on the presumption that the social whole has the form of

an expressive totality in which every sphere of social life "in itself contains in the immediate form of its expression the essence of the totality itself."[39] As Althusser emphasizes, "the co-presence of the elements with one another and the presence of each element with the whole are based on a *de jure* preliminary presence: the total presence of the concept [i.e. the abstract essence of the social whole] in all the determinations of its existence."[40] In sum, since each element of the totality expresses the state of that totality's essential determination, their historical development is immediately identical with its development (and thus they are also immediately contemporaneous with each other).

These considerations make it clear that a conjunctural account of historical specificity cannot set out from the presupposition that all elements of the conjuncture are, so to speak, of the same historical present or developing at the same pace—it must, in other words, reject any straightforwardly historicist picture of temporality. Given that a conjuncture describes a complex, rather than simple or "expressive," totality it follows that no single element within it can impose a unified temporality (viz. its temporality) upon the conjuncture as such. Instead, different elements have their own histories and rhythms of change and cannot, therefore, be strictly contemporaneous with each other. For this reason, it is necessary for conjunctural analysis to (1) establish the differential relations between the multiple historical temporalities within a conjuncture and (2) to show how these temporalities are shaped—preserved, intensified, suppressed, etc.—by their specific conjunctural articulation to other elements with different temporalities and vectors of historical change.

Relationality and time

This second point above is essential: although different elements may have different temporalities, these temporalities do not go unchanged by their relation within a given conjuncture. To assume the latter would be to maintain historical differentiation at the cost of a robust account of relational determination. If, however, conjunctural analysis is to remain consistent with its focus on relationality—that is, with its insistence that elements are, in a strong sense, shaped by their relations—it must also see the differential forms of historical time that exist within the conjuncture as themselves determined by their historically specific combination in that conjuncture. In other words, if, as Grossberg suggests, a conjuncture is composed of elements with "different temporalities," then the specific form of this differentiation must itself be explained conjuncturaly. Although not elaborated with direct reference to temporality, Grossberg addresses this problem, suggesting that the relative autonomy of different elements within a conjuncture (i.e. their degree of independence, or "disembeddedness," vis-a-vis other elements) is best understood as a function of their particular articulation within the relational fabric of their historical context. As he writes:

> Although euro-modernity grants to each domain a certain (relative) autonomy, we cannot assume that the forms or degrees of that autonomy are the same across domains, social formations, or conjunctures. So despite its apparent disembeddedness, a domain continues to be embedded within and relationally constituted by the social formation. It is both embedded and disembedded. More, the form of its embeddedness defines it as disembedded.[41]

This approach can easily be extended to the question of time in order to take stock of the relative autonomy of different historical temporalities within a conjuncture. Althusser points us in exactly this direction when he offers his own conjunctural account of historical time:

> The fact that each of these times and each of these histories is relatively autonomous does not make them so many domains which are independent of the whole: the specificity of each of these times and of each of these histories—in other words, their relative autonomy and independence—is based on a certain type of articulation in the whole, and therefore on a certain type of dependence with respect to the whole.[42]

Concretely, this means attending to the presence of uneven historical developments within a single context (recognizing the remnants of "older" social formations and "older" patterns of life which may be present along side more "modern" instances). Raymond Williams provides one language for doing this with his account of "dominant," "emergent," and "residual" cultural forms—this is a language that potentially allows us to describe asynchronous elements in the context of a structure in dominance.[43] It is not clear, however, that Williams abandons a historicist account in which a single normative conception of temporality functions as a yardstick against which other times are measured. The "emergent" and the "residual" appear at moments to function for Williams according to a logic of anachronism in which their difference is merely registered vis-à-vis their relative deviation from what is more properly of the present. As Harry Harootunian has argued, this logic of anachronism remains bound to an essentially historicist view of time. For Harootunian, the challenge instead is to grasp "temporal possibilities unchained from hegemonic unilinearism."[44] This is a project that requires us to recognize "the possibility of nonsynchronous synchronicities, different times coexisting with one another in the same present, rather than a pyramidal hierarch of levels."[45] It is my contention that a practice of cultural studies which takes the conjuncture as its central object faces this same imperative.

The politics of temporal multiplicity

Three things are at stake politically in this analysis of temporality:

(1) In the absence of a robust account of temporal multiplicity, certain logics of oppression may be obscured. As Marx writes with respect to the situation of uneven development in Germany: "Alongside the modern evils, we are oppressed by a whole series of inherited evils, arising from the passive survival of archaic and outmoded modes of production [. . .] . We suffer not only from the living, but also from the dead."[46] The German workers are at once exploited by modern forms of capitalist enterprise and by the remnants of feudal systems of domination, rooted in relations of personal obligation and dependency. A contextual account of social life must, therefore, attend to non-synchronous historical forms if it is to register certain instances of systemic injustice.

(2) As Dipesh Chakrabarty has suggested, the historicist imaginary—one rooted in a picture of homogenous historical time and linear progress—provided an ideological justification for European colonialism. As he writes:

> Historicism enabled European domination of the world in the nineteenth century. Crudely, one might say that it was one important form that the ideology of progress or "development" took from the nineteenth century on. Historicism is what made modernity or capitalism look not simply global but rather as something that became global *over time*, by originating in one place (Europe) and then spreading outside it.[47]

Massimiliano Tomba similarly affirms this point: "Unilinear historical progress allowed the measuring of the level of (Western) civilization attained by populations with histories different from those of Europe, thus justifying the domination of those who were

represented as lower down the scale."[48] On these accounts, a theoretically consistent anti-colonialism requires a critique of historicism.

(3) As Tomba has further noted, attention to the co-presence of multiple historical temporalities, allows one to register the unique forms of historical potential that are given by the articulation of multiple modes of production within a single social formation. Tomba makes this point via a reading of Marx's letters on the *obshchina* (the Russian peasant commune). In responding to his Russian interlocutors, Marx faced the following question: could the *obshchina* provide a nucleus for the organization of post-capitalist life, or was it necessary for capitalism to fully develop, thus eliminating these communal forms, before socialism could be constructed? In responding, Marx points to the possibilities vested in non-synchronous temporalities, arguing that, while the *obshchina* alone did not necessarily point beyond capitalism, in its articulation alongside the most modern forms of capital it created a unique form of historical possibility. As Tomba writes, "The coexistence and the clash between different temporalities show that historical possibilities do not collapse in the one-way temporality of capitalist civilization. Instead, we see that alternative routes are constantly being reopened. It is a matter of reading the convergence of historical times that are able to make the present explode."[49] At issue, then, is not a romantic affirmation of pre-capitalist life, but the productive possibility opened by "the encounter between different temporalities, in their new combination."[50]

I offer these three points to show some of what is at stake politically in a conjuncturalist account of plural temporality. In the following section I attend to the question of historical periodization and its political implications.

The problem of periodization

Thus far my analysis has been working backwards through the three elements of conjunctural analysis outlined by Grossberg.[51] I have suggested that the question of differential time has its logical basis in the abstract structure of the conjuncture itself. I have thus taken as my starting point Althusser's claim that "it is only possible to give content to the concept of historical time by defining historical time as the specific form of existence of the social totality under consideration."[52] What remains to be seen is how a method of historical periodization can be developed that remains consistent with these insights. That is, if conjunctural analysis must answer the question of "when and how we are/are not moving from one conjuncture to another," then it must not only be able to account for what differentiates the elements within a conjuncture from each other (what determines their relative dominance and specific temporality) but also what differentiates one conjuncture from another. This, however, requires one to specify what gives a conjuncture its particular unity—to specify, in other words, what makes a conjuncture sufficiently coherent that one may speak of it beginning or ending, or being, in some basic sense, different from another conjuncture.

Since it has already been established that conjunctures lack the essential unity of an expressive totality—i.e. a unity that follows from the immediate presence of an essence in every one of the parts that are its outward expression—it follows that the *differentia specifica* which demarcates one conjuncture from another cannot simply be elaborated as a function of the (dialectical) development of any one element or relation. As John Clarke makes clear, such a reduction would be fundamentally inconsistent with the basic elements of conjunctural analysis:

> Thinking conjuncturally implies examining the multiple—and potentially heterogeneous—forces, tendencies and trajectories that are compressed or condensed in a particular moment. These forces have different weights, different effectivities, different histories and even different rhythms—but it is

> there combination or coming together that constitutes a conjuncture. In such a perspective, the search for the primary cause represents a mistaken analytical route.[53]

Rather than think the unity of a conjuncture in relation to a single principle or causal factor, it is necessary, therefore, to consider a conjuncture as a "unity in difference." This term (one that is Althusserian in origin, but used frequently by Hall and others in cultural studies) describes the articulation of a plurality of non-identical, and often conflicting, social forces within a given historical moment. Any effort to establish the consistency of a conjuncture, and thus to make possible its contrast with other historical conjunctures, requires that its mode of unification be thought in terms of the condensation of multiple social tendencies and contradictions, and not their reduction to a single factor. Condensation, in this sense, may be likened to the form of "unity" described by Marx in the *Grundrisse* as the "concrete": "The concrete is concrete because it is the concentration of many determinations, hence the unity of the diverse."[54] This logic is implicit in Hall's description of a conjuncture as "a period during which the different social, political, economic and ideological contradictions that are at work in society come together to give it a specific and distinctive shape."[55] A conjuncture thus finds its coherence as a kind of metastable arrangement in which certain contradictions are, if not resolved, at least temporarily held in suspension. Its consistency, therefore, is that of a precarious balance between antagonistic forces.

In light of these considerations, it is apparent that to conduct an analysis at the level of the conjuncture requires one to look concretely at the particular historical actors who are involved—always in uneven and conflicting ways—in producing the specific settlement that defines the conjuncture. Within cultural studies (and especially Stuart Hall's work) this moment of stabilization is often theorized in Gramscian terms as a process through which a structural or "organic" crisis is settled via some provisional form of consensus.

In this Gramscian account, a conjuncture emerges when certain social contradictions that have come together in a particular historical moment—and thus become an "organic crisis"—are subject to a settlement which (temporarily) defers their complete resolution. It is within the space created by this settlement—which Gramsci calls "the terrain of the conjunctural"—that political struggles are carried out and in which "the forces of opposition organize."[56]

To employ conjunctural analysis as a method of historical periodization thus requires one to elaborate a dialectic between, on the one hand, the fusion of heterogeneous contradictions into an organic crisis and, on the other, the stabilization of this crisis as a conjuncture. As a mode of historical specification, therefore, conjuncturalism seeks to establish the temporal boundaries of a given conjuncture through an analysis of its emergence in response to a particular crisis and its breakdown when the settlement which it enacted is decomposed, falling apart in the face of some emergent form of social instability (i.e. the reemergence of an organic crisis). Reflecting on his own work analyzing the socio-political shifts in Britain during the 1970's and 80's, Hall gives us a sense for how such a dialectic may unfold in practice:

> In *Policing the Crisis* we tried to look at the postwar period, which—despite many contradictory aspects—was a conjuncture dominated by what has been called the post-war, social-democratic consensus. This political 'settlement' came apart in the crisis upheavals of the 1970's. Thatcherism, neo-liberalism, globalisation, the era dominated by market forces, brutally "resolved" the contradictions and opened a new conjuncture.[57]

Here Hall demonstrates a periodizing logic that grasps historical movement through an analysis of the composition and decomposition of conjunctural formations in response to the fusion (or condensation) of multiple crises and social contradictions. In this sense, as Hall has argued, a conjuncture is specified less by its duration than by the specific social dynamic it describes:

> A conjuncture can be long or short: it's not defined by time or by simple things like a change of regime—though these have their own effects. As I see it, history moves from one conjuncture to another rather than being an evolutionary flow. And what drives it forward is usually a crisis, when the contradictions that are always at play in any historical moment are condensed, or, as Althusser said, "fuse in a ruptural unity."[58]

Conclusion

In this paper I have attempted to elucidate the "principle of historical specification" as it has been interpreted in Marxian scholarship and to suggest that the tradition of cultural studies is grounded in this principle. As I have outlined, this is seen most clearly in its efforts to establish a theoretical foundation for the concept of a conjuncture and to, on this basis, develop certain methodological precepts that might guide the concrete work of "conjunctural analysis."

Cultural studies' practice of "conjunctural analysis" is partially a response to the limitations implicit in the more abstract modes of social critique sometimes associated with Marxian critical theory. As I have suggested, a conjuncture describes a relatively finite period of historical time, one that is characterized by persistent efforts to establish a temporary settlement between competing social forces, and thus to provisionally resolve certain social contradictions. As a mode of historical periodization, therefore, conjunctural analysis tends to punctuate history according to a two-fold movement: in the first, a multiplicity of crises and social contradictions "fuse" or become an "organic crisis" casting the present conjuncture into decline; in the second, a "resolution" is instituted, settling the organic crisis and establishing the terrain of a new conjuncture. Thus, rather than describe the social formation in relation to more abstract categories, conjunctural analysis seeks to account for the plurality of forces that, in their concrete activities and alliances, create what Gramsci calls the "terrain of the conjunctural." As a category, therefore, a "conjuncture" necessarily names a complex and internally differentiated field of social practice, one that encompasses the uneven relations between relatively autonomous actors, institutions, and levels of a social formation. Moreover, as I have suggested, largely following Althusser, thinking of a conjuncture in terms of the complex articulation of diverse elements requires that one also account for their differential temporality—for their different origins and rhythms of development, in short, for what we might call (borrowing a phrase from Harry Harootunian) their "synchronous nonsyncronicity."[59]

As Grossberg has suggested, the choice to approach social reality at this level of abstraction—i.e. at the level of the conjuncture—is in part motivated by the belief that it is there that political questions can best be addressed.[60] It is, in other words, at this level of generality that one is able to produce a sufficiently robust account of the social complexity that structures the immediate field of political possibilities. As a result, the conjuncture is taken to be a privileged concept in the formulation and testing of strategic questions. While more abstract accounts of the social may provide essential guidance in this process, a fundamental claim in the tradition of cultural studies surveyed above is that they are, when taken alone, inadequate to such a task.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Lawrence Grossberg, who provided feedback on a very early draft of this paper, and the anonymous reviewers at *Lateral* (as well as the journal's editorial team) who offered many constructive comments on the manuscript.

Notes

1. Karl Korsch, "Leading Principles of Marxism: A Restatement," 1937, https://www.marxists.org/archive/korsch/1937/restatement.htm.
2. Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
3. Stuart Hall, "Marx's Notes on Method: A 'Reading' of the '1857 Introduction,'" *Cultural Studies* 17, no. 2 (March 1, 2003): 116–117.
4. On limits of transhistorical abstraction, see also Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach*, especially thesis VI.
5. Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*; Hall, "Marx's Notes on Method," 116.
6. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, Vol. 40: Marx and Engels 1856–1859*, 1st edition (Moscow: International Publishers, 1983), 298.
7. Marx suggests such a mode of abstraction in the following passage from the 'Introduction' to the Grundrisse:

   > {T}his abstraction of labour as such is not merely the mental product of a concrete totality of labours. Indifference towards specific labours corresponds to a form of society in which individuals can with ease transfer from one form of labour to another, and where the specific kind is a matter of chance for them, hence indifference. Not only the category, labour, but labour in reality has here become the means of creating wealth in general, and has ceased to be organically linked with particular individuals in any specific form. { . . . } for the first time, the point of departure of modern economics, namely the abstraction of the category "labour," "labour as such", labour pure and simple, becomes true in practice.

   Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (Penguin Books Limited, 2005), 104–105.
8. Hall, "Marx's Notes on Method," 113.
9. Hall summarizes Marx's position as follows:

   > Classical Political Economy also speaks of "bourgeois" production and of private property as if these were the "essence" of the concepts, "production" and "property" and exhaust their historical content. In this way, Political Economy too presented the capitalist mode of production, not as a historical structure, but as the natural and inevitable state of things. At this level, even classical Political Economy retained an ideological presupposition at its "scientific" heart: it reduces, by abstraction, specific historical relations to their lowest common, trans-historical essence. Its ideology is inscribed in its method.

   Hall, "Marx's Notes on Method," 116.
10. Postone comments on this in a recent interview:

    > precisely because of the tightly structured, immanent nature of Marx's mode of presentation there {in *Capital*}, the *object* of Marx's critique (for

> example, value, as well as the labor that constitutes it, analyzed as historically specific forms) has frequently been taken as the *standpoint* of that critique. The methodological sections of the *Grundrisse* not only clarify this mode of presentation, but other sections {. . .} make explicit that the categories of *Kapital* such as value are historically specific, that the so-called labor theory of value is not a labor theory of (transhistorical) wealth. Precisely because it is not structured as immanently, the *Grundrisse* provides a key for reading *Kapital*.

M. Postone and T. Brennan, "Labor and the Logic of Abstraction: An Interview," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 108, no. 2 (April 1, 2009): 307.

11. Lawrence Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2010), 7. Stuart Hall has also noted this point: "In the United States, for instance, 'cultural studies' has become an umbrella for just about anything, and to ask whether someone is doing cultural studies or not is unlikely to evoke the answer you want." Stuart Hall, "The Emergence of Cultural Studies and the Crisis of the Humanities," *October* 53 (July 1, 1990): 22.
12. Stuart Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular,'" in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, ed. John Storey, 2nd edition (Prentice Hall, 1998), 453.
13. Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 169.
14. We might thus note that cultural studies tends to invert the traditional interpretive relationship between, for example, a given cultural text and its socio-historical context. Instead of establishing an account of the context as a means to inform the interpretation of the text, texts tend to be approached as instances from which to begin an analysis of the context. It is typical, therefore, for work in cultural studies to start with a specific textual object ("textual" conceived here in its broadest possible sense) and then move outwards from it in order to apprehend the real object of concern, viz. the specificity of its context. Hence, an account of the context fully emerges at the end of the analysis and not at its start. On this, see Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 55.
15. Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 26.
16. Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 40.
17. So closely linked is this concept with the project of cultural studies, that its intellectual practice is often glossed simply as "conjunctural analysis." See, e.g., Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler, eds., *Cultural Studies*, 1st edition (New York: Routledge, 1991), 8; Stuart Hall and Doreen Massey, "Interpreting the Crisis," *Soundings* 44 (Spring 2010): 57–71.
18. A brief treatment of this concept and its history can be found in Koivisto, Juha, and Mikko Lahtinen, "Conjuncture, Politico-Historical," *Historical Materialism* 20, no. 1 (January 1, 2012): 267–77. https://doi.org/10.1163/156920612X642204.
19. Stuart Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. Kuan-Hsing Chen and David Morley, 1st edition. (New York: Routledge, 1996), 414.
20. An early precedent for this approach to class can be found in Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis* Bonaparte.
21. Antonio Gramsci, *The Southern Question* (West Lafayette, IN: Bordighera Press, 1995). To take a second example, we could also describe "Fordism" as a hegemonic formation built on a provisional alliance between large-scale industrial capital and the industrial working class against finance and landed capital.
22. Lawrence Grossberg, *Under the Cover of Chaos: Trump and the Battle for the American Right*, 1st edition, (London, UK: Pluto Press, 2018), 57.

23. Stuart Hall, *Cultural Studies 1983: A Theoretical History*, ed. Jennifer Daryl Slack and Lawrence Grossberg, reprint edition (Durham: London: Duke University Press Books, 2016), 162.
24. As Hall writes:

> Gramsci addresses the critical issue, so long evaded by many marxist scholars, of the failure of political conditions in "the West" to match or correspond with those which made 1917 in Russia possible — a central issue, since, despite these radical differences (and the consequent failure of proletarian revolutions of the classical type in "the West"), Marxists have continued to be obsessed by the "Winter Palace" model of revolution and politics.

Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity," 427.

25. I have argued that the concept of a "conjuncture" articulates two distinct, but related, theoretical problems: one pertaining to a questions of historical analysis and periodization, and another dealing with the nature of the social totality and the relations which compose it. Although different in substance and in its level of abstraction, we might consider a comparison to the way Etienne Balibar treats Marx's concept of the mode of production in *Reading Capital*. Here Balibar suggests a mode of production primarily describes a specific combinatory dynamic—that is, a structure of relations between different elements of the economy—and then, secondarily, a unit of historical periodization. That is, only by way of a comparative analysis of the differential forms assumed by specific modes of production might we see it as a category of historical analysis. For Balibar, therefore, the mode of production has both a synchronic and a diachronic axis. Synchronic when it functions to described a specific field of articulated elements; diachronic when it describes the historically differentiated character of this field vis-á-vis preceding forms of articulation. Not unlike a mode of production in Balibar's account, a conjuncture describes both a particular way of conceptualizing social relations, and a particular way of marking historical difference. See Etienne Balibar, "The Basic Concepts of Historical Materialism," in Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, *Reading Capital* (London; New York: Verso, 2009), 228.
26. Hall quoted in Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 42.
27. Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 42.
28. As Grossberg writes,

> A conjuncture is constituted by, at, and as the articulation of multiple, overlapping, competing, reinforcing, etc., lines of force and transformation, destabilization and (re-) stabilization, with differing temporalities and spatialities, producing a potentially but never actually chaotic assemblage or articulations of contradictions and contestations. Thus, it is always a kind of totality, always temporary, complex, and fragile, that one takes hold of through analytic and political work.

Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense,* 41.

29. Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (London; New York: Verso Books, 1988), 41.
30. Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (London: Verso, 2005), 198. One will note that reference to Althusser is by no means arbitrary or extraneous. As Grossberg indicates, "The concept of conjuncture emerged out of debates with and within Marxism and political theory, especially in and around the work of Althusser and the revitalization of Gramscian theory." Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense,* 40. For a detailed analysis of Althusser's work from a cultural studies perspective see Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms," *Media, Culture & Society* 2, no. 1 (January 1, 1980): 57–72.
31. On the concept of "expressive totality," see Althusser, *For Marx.*
32. Althusser, *For Marx,* 203. To exemplify his contention, Althusser makes reference Hegel's *Philosophy of History*. Taking the example of Rome, Althusser summarizes Hegel as follows: "Rome: its mighty history, its institutions, its crises and ventures are nothing but the temporal manifestations of the internal principle of the abstract legal personality." See Althusser, *For Marx*, 102.
33. On the idea of a relational ontology and its presence in the history of philosophy, see Vittorio Morfino, *Plural Temporality: Transindividuality and the Aleatory Between Spinoza and Althusser* (Leiden; Boston: Brill Academic Publishing, 2014), 46–72.
34. Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 20.
35. See, e.g., Althusser, Louis. "The Object of Capital." In Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar *Reading Capital*. (London; New York: Verso, 2009), 104.
36. Althusser, "The Object of Capital," 108.
37. Althusser, "The Object of Capital," 104.
38. Althusser, "The Object of Capital," 105.
39. Althusser, "The Object of Capital," 105.
40. Althusser, "The Object of Capital," 105.
41. Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 92.
42. Althusser, "The Object of *Capital*," 111.
43. Raymond Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," in *Culture and Materialism* (London; New York: Verso, 2005), 31–50.
44. Harry Harootunian, *Marx After Marx: History and Time in the Expansion of Capitalism* (Columbia University Press, 2015), 2.
45. Harootunian, *Marx After Marx*, 22.
46. Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume 1: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes, reprint edition (London; New York, N.Y: Penguin Classics, 1992), 91.
47. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 7.
48. Massimiliano Tomba, *Marx's Temporalities* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014), ix.
49. Tomba, *Marx's Temporalities*, 180. It is worth noting that Marx's account of the Russian *obshchina* also suggests that the account of "primitive accumulation" found in *Capital* is not universal. His writings on Russia suggest other paths into, and out of, capitalism.
50. Tomba, *Marx's Temporalities*, 180.
51. Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense,* 41.
52. Althusser, "The Object of *Capital*," 120.

53. John Clarke, "After Neo-Liberalism? Markets, States, and the Reinvention of Public Welfare," in *Cultural Studies and Finance Capitalism: The Economic Crisis and After*, ed. Mark Hayward (London: Routledge, 2012), 101.
54. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (Penguin Books Limited, 2005).
55. Hall and Massey, "Interpreting the Crisis," 57.
56. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (International Publishers Co, 1971), 178.
57. Hall and Massey, "Interpreting the Crisis," 58.
58. Hall and Massey, "Interpreting the Crisis," 57.
59. Harootunian, *Marx After Marx*. 16.
60. Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 40.

Bio



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Douglas Spielman is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Communication at the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill. His past work has looked at representations of time in Marx's theory of value. Douglas's current research analyzes the ways in which labor was mobilized as a category of political recognition and right in early modern and modern social thought. He is, in part, concerned with how these usages of the category were impacted by technoscientific developments and discourses.

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Debord in Watts: Race and Class Antagonisms Under Spectacle

Heath Schultz

ABSTRACT In this paper, I explore Guy Debord's analysis of race and racializing processes by closely examining the use of footage of the Watts rebellion in Debord's film *The Society of the Spectacle* (1973), along with a close reading of Debord's 1965 text on the uprising, "The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy." Debord's Marxist perspective on Watts understands the insurgents as potential revolutionary actors, primed for a "second proletarian assault against class society" (SotS, Thesis 47). To complicate Debord's position, I look at the similarities and differences between his stance and the emergent theoretical paradigm of Afropessimism, which understands anti-black violence not as contingent upon capitalist alienation but instead as gratuitous violence required to uphold the figure of Humanity within civil society.

> *Do I think we can make it through rioting? Do you think we can make it through on promises!?* —Watts man[1]

> *It is hard to explain to someone what it feels like to be black in a white world. The things that happen to you daily, that are very much a part of you, are hard to remember because they become so routine. There is really nothing I can tell you here that would fully let you know what it is like because it is too horrible and too deep to really communicate to anyone.* —Watts woman[2]

Five months after the Watts Rebellion took place in August 1965, ABC News aired a report featuring interviews with several black Watts residents. The middle-aged white host informs us that by interviewing these residents, he hopes "to add understanding to the most difficult of all domestic problems in America." That problem was and is race. Beneath the populist tone, the television program reflected a tension that continues to pervade Marxism and most liberatory politics: Is race a division within the proletariat manufactured by the managerial class to fracture any revolutionary potential? Or does racism emerge from a premodern world, transforming alongside capitalism's evolution?[3] With this tension in mind, we can rephrase the two quotes that open this paper. In the first quote, the Watts man suggests the Watts riot is, at least in part, a symptomatic manifestation of spectacle espousing toxic racisms and structural hierarchy. *We can no longer make it on your promises*—promises of jobs, wealth, proper housing, an end to police violence. No more promises of "progress." To put it crudely, if one reads the quote from a strictly class-oriented Marxist perspective, the antidote to this man's ailments are political-economic, and come with the overthrow of capitalism.

In the second quote, a woman from Watts implicitly situates *social death* as central to her analysis of why the Watts uprising occurred. The explosion in Watts was white society's chickens coming home to roost. Aware that she is speaking with ABC, she addresses the

white world as Other in informing the listener—white society—they cannot understand. It is too terrible to communicate to *anyone*. Reading between the lines, one suspects she means that, as a black woman, she cannot be heard in this particular white venue for speech. This inability to be heard in a public venue signifies her social death. The interviewee uses "anyone" as a stand-in for the whole of white folks because they have access to the public sphere or civil society; through this popular television program, they will hear her words and see her picture but never understand her. The routine quality of this racist horror that constitutes black life in Watts is beyond words. Inversely, it is implied that many black people understand this horrible-ness that exceeds description. This second interviewee requires not the end of capitalism but the end of white civil society.

In this paper, I will explore this tension in Guy Debord's analysis of race and racializing processes. This project is overdue. Debord's oeuvre continues to inform many academics, artists, and activists, yet there remains little scholarship on Debord's understanding of race within the spectacle.[4] I will closely analyze the use of footage of the Watts rebellion in Debord's 1973 film *The Society of the Spectacle* (hereafter *SotS*), along with a close reading of Debord's 1965 text on the rebellion, "The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy." To complicate Debord's Marxist perspective, I will look at the similarities and differences between his stance and the emergent theoretical paradigm of Afropessimism, in particular the work of Frank Wilderson, which posits anti-black violence as gratuitous violence. For Wilderson, anti-blackness is required to uphold the figure of humanity within white civil society and Western civilization.

Finally, I hope to show that Debord foreshadows an anti-state Marxism, particularly what is known as "communization" current, and may not be entirely at odds with anti-blackness as is suggested by Afropessimism.[5] Communization is a theoretical elaboration of Marxism emerging out 1968 uprisings. While there are significant divergences within the current, communization generally shares a rejection of the Party form and a rejection of the seizure of the means of production. Instead, it views revolution as an "immediate destruction of capitalist relations of production."[6] With the destruction of capitalist relations, communization rejects the affirmation of the proletariat as a subject and works toward its abolition. I contend that this shift in theoretical vision from affirmation to abolition offers a non-conflictual relation to anti-blackness and allows for multiple grammars of suffering within a struggle against capital and anti-blackness.

Watts in Context

The events known as the Watts Riot took place in August 11–18, 1965, sparked by an altercation between white cops and black residents of Watts, a predominantly poor and black neighborhood in Los Angeles. The altercation escalated when a cop assaulted a community member and eventually pulled a shotgun on another. During the course of the altercation, a crowd had gathered and witnessed the events. Word spread throughout the neighborhood and the riot erupted. Thirty-four deaths resulted from the event, the vast majority of them black Watts residents killed by the LAPD. One thousand people were injured and four thousand arrested. Property damage was estimated at $200 million, mostly white, middle-class and ruling elite properties in the 46.5 square-mile zone "where approximately 35,000 were 'active as rioters' and 72,000 'close spectators' swarmed."[7] The National Guard brought 16,000 soldiers to the streets, along with the LAPD, highway patrol, and every other law enforcement person LA could find.

> 261 buildings were damaged or destroyed by fire . . . [In the epicenter of destruction], a three-block area, 41 buildings occupied primarily by food, liquor, furniture, and clothing were demolished. Few homes, churches, or libraries

> were damaged, a fact that supports the contention that the Watts Uprising was no mindless riot but rather a conscious, though inchoate, insurrection.[8]

We can also understand the Watts uprising as part of what Cedric Robinson calls the Black radical tradition, a rediscovering of "Black historical experience nearly grounded under the intellectual weight and authority of the official European version of the past" that problematized how Western radicalism understood the possibilities for revolutionary social change. The Black radical tradition involves the development of a "collective consciousness informed by the historical struggles for liberation" which "draws on the discourse of revolutionary masses" with an impulse to make history in its own terms.[9]

Debord penned "The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy" in response to these events in 1965.[10] Debord begins his essay by describing the three-day revolt:

> the blacks of Los Angeles, despite reinforcements, are unable to be controlled. [. . .] by the third day they had armed themselves by looting accessible gun stores, enabling them to fire even on police helicopters. It took thousands of police and soldiers, including an entire infantry division supported by tanks, to confine the riot to the Watts area, and several more days of street fighting to finally bring it under control.[11]

Many of the insurgents were inspired by images of the Vietnamese guerrilla fighters in response to an increasingly militarized police reaction, including, as Debord notes, the firing of rifles at police helicopters similar to the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam. Historian Gerald Horne notes that there was organization precisely where one would assume there was none—in looting and destruction: "a number of persons would ride by a store in a car, get out, break windows, return to the car, and drive to another area. In their wake other cars would come by and begin to seize and load the merchandize. The burning did not start until the looting was completed in most instances."[12] There were further signs of organization and communication between insurgents—teenagers and young adults were sighted coming out of telephone booths, jumping into cars, and heading to new locations. Destruction "appeared to be organized by reason of the types of businesses attacked and the expertness of burning."[13] Some insurgents broke into stores and stole clerk's aprons to disguise themselves from police; police channels were interrupted by clandestine radio messages, etc.

Debord emphasizes that the "rioters don't have any leaders," and that the "leaders" of the black community, should they have had a chance, would have sold out the revolt. He does this primarily by quoting the police chief's incomprehension at the law's inability to mediate with a particular group that represents the black community (like the NAACP, for example). The general secretary of the NAACP, Debord reports, believes "riots should be put down with all necessary force."[14] Debord next quotes a Cardinal from Los Angeles who denounces the rioters, and especially the looters, as a "premeditated revolt against the rights of one's neighbor and against respect for law and order."[15] The point is not that NAACP's secretary or the Cardinal is worse than any other liberal leader or bureaucrat, it is that any collaboration with the State, with the spectacle, inevitably leads to respect for the law and order of the bourgeois society that any revolutionary is trying to destroy. Against the clamoring for *representation* and containment of the people of Watts, Debord insists that what "American blacks are really daring to demand is the right to really *live*, and in the final analysis this requires nothing less than the total subversion of this society."[16] For Debord, the revolutionary potential brought about by the insurrection in Watts was the demand to *live* and not simply *survive*.

Commodity Goes Social

Debord's analysis of race emerges from his theorization of the spectacle and the commodity. Let us then take a few moments to review Debord's understanding of commodity before we proceed to his article on Watts.

When Debord writes in his book *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967) that "the spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images," he is detourning Marx's famous phrase from *Capital*: "Capital is not a thing, but a social relation between persons which is mediated through things."[17] This "thing" is the commodity, which is at the center of the society of the spectacle. Marxist scholar Anselm Jappe suggests "Debord's use of 'image' and 'spectacle' should be understood as an extension of Marx's formulation of the commodity-form."[18] Both the image and commodity abstract the multiplicity of experience to an equal, exchangeable form. In the film version of *SotS*, Debord elaborates this idea by dryly reading long and complex excerpts from the book version of *SotS* combined with appropriated images. For example, at minute 00:16:00 of the film, the images are as follows: union bureaucrats / half-nude, sexualized young women ("Young-Girls")[19] / cars / politicians with cars / more Young-Girls / Young-Girls with commodities.[20] While the sequence above unfolds, we hear Debord's voice-over:

> In the spectacle's basic practice of incorporating into itself all the *fluid* aspects of human activity so as to possess them in a congealed form, and of *inverting* living values into purely abstract values, we recognize our old enemy *the commodity,* which seems at first glance so trivial and obvious, yet which is actually so complex and full of metaphysical subtleties. [21]

Like Marx, Debord points out the ways concrete and useful human labor are transformed (abstracted) into a generalized form such that it can enter into the social world as equivalent to other commodities *as a mode of expression* or *an appearance* of use-value.[22] This signals the transformation of use-value into exchange-value, essential to Marx's labor theory of value: "With the disappearance of the useful character of the products of labor, the useful character of the kinds of labor embodied in them also disappears; this in turn entails the disappearance of the different concrete forms of labor [. . . .] They are all together reduced to the same kind of labor, human labor in the abstract."[23] Debord further complicates this by detourning Marx, thereby adding a new layer to his thesis: it is not only concrete labor that is transformed, but *living values*. In this instance his voice-over is coupled with images of a nude female model, union bureaucrats, and finally a car on display in a car show. We might consider then that *images* of living values—lifestyles expressed through commodities—enter into an economy of ways of living as images *projected into* the social realm. Alienated sexuality, automobiles, and political representatives all represent a matrix of alienated as well as existential possibilities for *living* turned *commodity*. "Authentic life," like concrete useful labor, is abstracted so that it can enter into an economy of image-commodities projected above the "real world."

Detourning Marx's influential writing on the fetishism of the commodity Debord continues in the voice-over:

> The fetishism of the commodity—the domination of society by "intangible as well as tangible things"—attains its ultimate fulfillment in the spectacle, where the real world is replaced by a selection of images which are projected above it, yet which at the same time succeed in making themselves regarded as the epitome of reality. [24]

Spectacle offers the ultimate fulfillment with the abstraction of *living* values to abstract values. By utilizing an image-commodity "projected above the real world" it is able to constitute life-as-commodity. This life-as-commodity becomes the "epitome of reality" because it requires social, legal, and political infrastructures that correspond to them. That we want cars, for example, is essential to the urban organization around the individualized automobile, the consumption of oil, the nuclear family, etc. It also facilitates investment in capitalism, and thus our alienation, by offering images of bourgeois possibilities within spectacle.

Marx tells us that fetishism *attaches* itself to the products of labor when they are produced as commodities, which makes fetishism inseparable from commodity production. An attachment would supersede a simple illusion since it generates real conditions: "The social relations between their private labors appear as what they are, i.e. they do not appear as direct social relations between persons in their work, but rather as *material* relations between persons and social relations between things."[25] In other words, "under the conditions of commodity production, producers do not relate to one another in a direct, social way; they first enter into a relationship with one another during the act of exchange—through the products of their labor."[26] Debord reiterates this form of relation in his film by showing series of images depicting Young-Girls in various settings: in their bikinis at the beach, on photo-shoots, and finally modeling with a muscle car in their swimsuits. His voice-over rolls on: the spectacle "holds up to view the world of the commodity" which dominates all of experience.[27] The spectacle is the world of the commodity and it develops in tandem with people's *estrangement* from one another and from what they produce.

The following sequence of the film (00:18:26) begins as follows: a shot of a factory polluting the air and the city of Venice / smoke polluting Mexico City / trash piled high in Paris with cars casually driving by / polluted water / a long sequence from the Watts Riots including burning buildings, arrests, police brutality / the French National Police being trained in street fighting. As the images progress, Debord explains in his voice-over that the commodity has pervaded the social realm brought about by the Industrial Revolution's mass production for a global market. This encroachment upon the social via the economy created the conditions for the commodity to "finally become fully visible as a power that *colonized* all social life."[28]

Debord is making a double claim with his use of colonization. First, in order to expand its market, capitalism must incorporate more workers and consumers into the economy and expand its reach into new terrain. Second, the underbelly to the world where a bikini-clad girl next to the muscle car can exist is a city being polluting by a factory and trash piled up. These realities are the shadows of what is "projected" into the social world of spectacle. Debord's shadowy footage casts light on spectacle's excrement—it's trash, smokestacks, and polluted water. If the spectacle is projected above the real world for us to *consume*, Debord's figuration suggests that the "real world" beneath the spectacle is literally a place of spectacles' shit. Debord's use of sequencing in the film is demonstrative of his dialectical thinking; he begins with the fetishism of the commodity, followed by scenes of pollution, and finally resistance in Watts.

Representations of the Watts Insurrection against the Commodity

> "*Comfort will never be comfortable enough for those who seek what is not on the market, what in fact the market specifically eliminates.*"[29]

The film continues into a sequence of the Watts Riots while the voice-over describes the proliferation of the commodity society. Capitalist social relations expand exponentially because there is nothing beyond *consumable survival*. Living is within the realm of privation and the ability to survive outside spectacle shrinks correspondingly—"it may gild poverty, but it cannot transcend it."[30]

Debord sequences the first twenty seconds of the footage from Watts as follows: cops arresting and dragging black men through the streets / cops in pursuit of presumed insurgents / cops open firing into the darkness. To summarize this brief sequence we could say the police are *active* subjects in combat. Just as Debord brings spectacle back to the ground by showing us its excrement, he suggests the Watts revolt brought class war back to street-level.[31] Next, we see a few more images of black Watts residents arrested by police, but there is a shift: a black man who was face down on the street in a position suggesting that he was being harassed or assaulted by the police rises to his feet, apparently no longer subject to police force. In the next image we see buildings ablaze. Now the insurgents have become the active participants—historical actors.

We need to return to Debord and Marx's analysis of how the commodity-form extends into the social realm to best understand this sequence. Debord theorizes how the commodity has *colonized* all social life by tracing the historical victory of exchange-value over use-value, "only when a certain threshold is passed in the development and volume of exchange does production itself come to be defined essentially in terms of the creation of exchange-value." After this threshold is passed use-value can only be attained when mediated by exchange-value.[32] In turn, we face an "augmented survival"—the inability for one to survive unless that survival is mediated by exchange-value. One has no choice but to consume the commodity because all of society's survival, as long as there is spectacle, relies upon it. With respect to Watts it is important to recognize those who are excluded from labor and the traditional working class as still subject to the capitalist economy. Debord makes this claim explicitly:

> The falling rate of use-value, which is a constant of the capitalist economy, gives rise to a new form of privation within the realm of *augmented survival*; this is not to say that this realm is emancipated from the old poverty: on the contrary, it requires the vast majority to take part as wage workers in the unending pursuit of its ends—a requirement to which, as everyone knows, one must either submit or die.[33]

Augmented survival becomes naturalized and the basis for capitalist social organization. Debord makes this analysis in the voice-over *while* the battle in Watts is raging on screen, suggesting the insurgents of Watts are both a reaction to and immanent to the spectacle. Debord emphasizes the victory of exchange-value over use-value which leads to the degradation of life toward "mere survival" as opposed to "living." This is central to Debord's infamous insurrectionary reading of the Watts uprising in 1965 which he understood as "as a new sign of negation that marks the failure of capitalist abundance" that foreshadows "a second proletarian assault against class society."[34]

Debord's Racial Politics under the Commodity

Debord's writes his most explicit explanation of racism near the end of "Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy":

> The spectacle is *universal*, it pervades the globe just as the commodity does. But since the world of the commodity is based on class conflict, the commodity itself is hierarchical. The necessity for the commodity (and hence for the spectacle, whose role is to *inform* the commodity world) to be both universal

> and hierarchical leads to a universal hierarchization. But because this hierarchization must remain *unavowed,* it is expressed in the form of unavowable, because *irrational,* hierarchical value judgments in a world of *irrational rationalization*. It is this hierarchization that creates *racisms* everywhere.[35]

Let's try to decipher Debord's difficult statement by looking to an earlier moment in the same essay, Debord writes "the Watts riot was not a *racial* conflict: the rioters left alone the whites who were in their path, attacking only white policemen . . . Martin Luther King himself had to admit that the revolt went beyond the limit of his specialty . . . he said 'This was not a race riot, it was a class riot.'"[36] How does Debord create a reading that Watts was "not a racial conflict" but simultaneously acknowledge the racialization of the Watts community?

Debord begins his explanation as to *why* Watts was the point of explosion in 1965 by noting that the Los Angeles black population is especially *separated* from the "California super-opulence that is flaunted all around them. Hollywood, the pole of the global spectacle, is right next door. They are promised that, with patience, they will join in America's prosperity."[37] This promise is key to the mechanics of spectacle—an image of desirable life-ways always at a distance. Debord acknowledges that black people in the US are "treated inherently inferior in every area of daily life" in a society where all power is derived from purchasing power. Monetary wealth will never make black people acceptable in America, it "will only make a *rich n*****because blacks as a whole *represent poverty* in a society of hierarchized wealth."[38] Here the people of Watts are located in a semiotic, and subsequently material, *structural* position dictated by the commodity's hierarchical colonization of all social life. Black people in the US can never collapse the distance between the promise of spectacle and the conditions it offers because "spectacle cannot be actualized either immediately or equally."[39] The black position in Debord's hierarchy functions as "the perfect spectacular object-lesson": if you don't participate in the spectacle, you, too, could fall into the impoverished position of the black object.[40] For a people to *represent poverty* those people must be policed into the real position of poverty, their wretchedness maintained as a possibility to be feared and reviled. Precisely for this reason it is this structural position which holds the possibility to destroy the hierarchies of spectacle—not through a particular program, but through the exposure and disruption of the "colonization of all social life" and its corresponding legal and political apparatuses. The super-exploited black subject of Watts becomes Debord's great hope of the "new proletarian consciousness," harboring a collective understanding that they are "not masters of their own activities or of their own lives."[41] This structural position holds the possibility to negate and disrupt the rhythms and circulation of the "spectacle-commodity economy" by "demanding the egalitarian *actualization* of the American spectacle of everyday life, demanding the half-heavenly, half-earthly values of the spectacle be put to the test."[42] By putting spectacle to the test, its promise is exposed as undeliverable. This exposure creates a break in the projected image and returns us again to the shadowy material reality beneath spectacle's imagery, only this time it is not Debord the filmmaker illustrating this reality through image juxtaposition, but revolutionary subjects in dialectical class conflict creating historical conditions to destitute the spectacle-commodity economy.[43]

In a provocative phrase Debord reinforces the black population of Watts as potentially revolutionary actors: "In the United States today the whites are *enslaved* to the commodity while the blacks are negating it. The blacks are asking for *more than the whites*—this is the core of a problem that has no solution except the dissolution of the white social system."[44] It is unclear if Debord uses *enslaved* ironically to instigate a

comparison with the historical conditions of U.S. slavery. If so, we might read this rhetorical move as an inversion of the thresholds of captivity as they are historically understood and experienced—black folks occupy a *more* liberatory position because they can, through practical action, disrupt the "white social system," here understood as the spectacle. Everyone under spectacle is alienated, but black people *know it* and thus become *less enslaved* than white Americans. "In this sense they are not the most backward sector of American society, but the most advanced. They are *negation at work*." Debord hammers his point: "They appear as what they really are: the *irreconcilable enemies*, not of the great majority of Americans, but of the alienated way of life of the entire modern society."[45]

Afropessimism and Problematizing Analogy in *Society of the Spectacle*

We can expose the potential weaknesses of Debord's analysis by juxtaposing it with Afropessimism, a theoretical orientation most closely associated with the concept of social death. First articulated by sociologist Orlando Patterson, social death is a marker of a slave relation. This relation is constituted by *gratuitous* violence and the "structural position of noncommunicability in the face of all other positions," a void of relationality.[46] This is in opposition to Debord's analysis, which recognizes the asymmetrical and racialized violence of the spectacle as *contingent* upon the violence inherent under capitalism. Saidiya Hartman elaborates the definition by theorizing that the slave relation is also reliant upon accumulation and fungibility—to be owned and traded, to have one's existence defined by their captor.[47] Finally, the socially dead is marked by natal alienation, "which is to say, a slave has *no symbolic currency or material labor power to exchange*. A slave does not enter into a transaction of value (however asymmetrical), but is subsumed by direct relations or force."[48] This subsumption expresses a despotic irrationality as opposed to a symbolic rationality expressed by the worker, whose demand might be satisfied through a victory in a struggle against capital. Recall Debord's passage above in which he states the spectacle requires a (racial) hierarchization precisely because it is based on class conflict articulated by the commodity society's hierarchy, and thus exists in the rational symbolic schema of capitalism. This schema generates "irrational rationalization," a "hierarchization that creates racisms everywhere."[49] Afropessimist and critic Frank Wilderson, on the other hand, argues there is no rational schema that explains the social death of black people in the US, it is a "despotic irrationality." More succinctly, "one could say that slavery is closer to capital's primal desire than is exploitation."[50]

For Wilderson, one of the consequences of understanding racism as contingent on spectacle is a construction of a new proletarian *we,* which resonates strongly with Debord's "new proletarian consciousness."[51] The Watts uprising occupies a similar space in *SotS* (film) as moments like revolutionary Spain in 1936 and France in May 1968. Each of these moments can be understood as the proletarian subject seizing historical time *of their own volition*, not subject to the whims of capitalism or authoritarian organizations.[52] From the point of view of Wilderson, Debord's new proletarian subject acts as a *suture* that avoids seeing gratuitous anti-black violence as structural framework for the insurgents of Watts. This suturing, for Wilderson, is an enactment of violence by Marxism because it polices one's ability to contemplate how the Slave—the socially dead—is exiled from the capacity to transform time and space, to transform history.[53] Wilderson offers that Black Liberation and the possibility of resistance is a negative dialectic—a politics of refusal, *not* an affirmation. This negative dialectic of Black Liberation is a "program of complete disorder," of incoherence. For Wilderson this incoherence must be embraced and "allow oneself to be elaborated by it if one's politics

are the desire to take down this country."[54] The positioning of the Black subject outside of civil society would require a complete disfiguration of society as we know it, a total civil war that re-appropriates Blackness as affirmative and enabling rather than that of death. This is the "scandal" that brings society to pieces.[55]

The social death of black people is born of the production of the Human, which is diametrically reliant upon the destruction of the Slave. Wilderson argues, "Through chattel slavery the world gave birth and coherence to both the joys of domesticity and to its struggles of political discontent; and with these joys the struggles of the Human was born, but not before it murdered the Black, forging a symbiosis between the political ontology of Humanity and the social death of Black."[56] What this means for Wilderson is that even with a political revolution (Marxist, feminist, environmental, etc.) black people will still exist as socially dead because these liberatory paradigms are founded upon the death of the Slave.[57] Wilderson explains this in clear terms in an interview with Jared Ball:

> [Marxists] wouldn't say, "Well you know, there's some good capitalists and some bad capitalists." They would say, "the capitalist as a category has to be destroyed." What freaks them out about an analysis of anti-Blackness is that this applies to the category of the Human, which means that they have to be destroyed regardless of their performance, or of their morality, and that they occupy a place of power that is completely unethical, regardless of what they do. And they're not going to do that. Because what are they trying to do? They're trying to build a better world. What are we trying to do? We're trying to *destroy the world. Two irreconcilable projects.*[58]

From this vantage point, Debord's identification of a new proletarian subject in Watts fetishizes a black struggle and misreads social death as hierarchical subject formation within capitalism. Debord underlines the distinction and re-grounds the conversation to state violence and interpretation of that violence:

> The American blacks can rest assured that as long as they keep quiet they will in most cases be allowed to *survive*. Capitalism has become sufficiently concentrated and interlinked with the state to distribute "welfare" to the poorest. But by the very fact that they lag behind in the advance of socially organized survival, the blacks pose the problems of *life;* what they are really demanding is not to survive but to *live*.[59]

Recent black liberation struggles have brought attention to the fact that both currently and historically black people have in fact *not* been allowed to survive. While Debord may be right in his assertion that the Watts revolt was a demand to *live*, it is equally as possible it is a demand to *survive* from the perspective of Afropessimism. The point is succinctly summarized by the murder of Eric Garner and his last words, "I can't breathe," spoken as he was choked to death by police in New York City borough Staten Island on July 17, 2014. Subsequently "I can't breathe" became a rallying cry of Black Lives Matter activists, tragically and poetically suggesting a condition of black life in America.[60]

Debord's passage above is a testament to his inability to grasp social death, and thus his inability to offer a suitable explanation of violence in Watts. However, an alternate reading to Debord's construction of the Watts insurgents as creating a new proletarian consciousness might see Debord as trying destroy the world of the commodity rather than trying to "make the world better" through revolutionary action, as Wilderson suggests. Situationist scholar Jason E. Smith notes that film *SotS*, made in 1973—five years after the failed revolution of 1968—illustrates Debord's atrophied belief in the seizure and appropriation of the capitalist city and its infrastructures. Instead, the

contemporary capitalist city, organized around the logic of the commodity, had become so uninhabitable, so unsalvageable, that it was only good for burning.[61] Debord's emphasis on destruction and Wilderson's call for an embrace of complete disorder situates Debord's Marxism as less antithetical than it might originally appear to Wilderson's Afropessimism.

Through the Impasse? On State Violence and those "Without Reserves"

In his book *Riot. Strike. Riot,* Joshua Clover identifies 1965-1973 as a hinge in capital's transitionary period from primarily production to primarily circulation, intensifying a [racialized] surplus population. Recall that Watts takes place in 1965, foreshadowing a wave of urban uprisings that would follow. This shift to circulation is important because it alters the pressure points of capital, and thus the sites of struggle. In Clover's analysis, the unemployed and/or the excluded can no longer disrupt capital at the point of production—the factory. Instead it must be disrupted at the point of circulation—the street, the port, the market, the warehouse. Among other consequences, resistance at the point of circulation will encounter the State, which is to say the police.[62] With all this in mind, Clover writes, "Debord captures something about the overdeveloped world and its apparent abstraction. The police now stand *in place of* the economy, the violence of the commodity made flesh."[63] To elaborate his point, he quotes from Debord's essay: "What is the policeman? He is the active servant of the commodity, the man in complete submission to the commodity."[64] Debord's explanation of the police as *only* protectors of the commodity requires the forcible submission of the black population of Watts to the logic of the commodity, and by extension its racial hierarchization. For Debord, this policing is not an enacting of anti-black violence toward black people (Wilderson's despotic irrationality), but an ongoing containment through the policing of the subject of capital. This police action is in service of maintaining the worker/consumer subject as contained within the logic of the commodity economy. Debord also recognizes, however, the presence of police as a primary instrument of violence the insurgents of Watts experience.

Capitalism's shift toward a period that prioritizes circulation also swells the surplus population, a process Clover describes as "the production of nonproduction."[65] It is no surprise that this production of nonproduction hits the black population first and the hardest. Despite this expulsion from the workforce, the surplus population are unable to exit the matrix of the capital relation because they still require wages to live, they still need to work.[66] Clover is rearticulating a group that has been described in various ways: for Marxists, the lumpenproletariat; for Fanon, the colonized; for Wilderson, the Slave. While all diverge in analysis, each describes those "without reserves" and those who act as a negation to society.[67] Clover avoids identifying this group with a single definition to remain sensitive to particularities of context. Instead, Clover generalizes an economic trend and abstracts nonworkers as a surplus population. With Clover's abstraction, he links the colonized, the Slave, and the lumpen through a shared experience as subject of State violence.[68] This everyday contact with State violence is cause for resistance to that violence, hence Fanon's call to destroy the colonizers, Wilderson's call for the end of the world, Clover's embrace of the riot, and Debord's call for the burning of spectacle. Each share their hatred of the police as purveyors of state violence, and each embrace, in one form or another, struggle against the police as a necessary stage in the eradication of state violence. For these reasons, Clover declares struggles like the Watts revolt as having as much or more origin in slave rebellions as European labor struggles against capitalism.[69] By opening his frame of analysis to incorporate and/or remain responsive to Black

Marxism, the Black radical tradition, Afropessimism, and anticolonial theorists, Clover is able to create space for a liberatory struggle that might locate its lineage outside the heritage of European labor struggle while maintaining his Marxist analysis of the shifts in capital and the subsequent sites of struggle.[70] Clover finds a way to incorporate multiple grammars of suffering into his analysis.

Clover's analysis of surplus populations works in conjunction with his analysis of how the riot has been historically racialized in effort to naturalize rebels as lacking rationality, thus helping to determine them not fully Human. This tautology creates justification for the racialization of the riot and a subsequent justification of racialized domination.[71] For Clover, the racialized production of surplus populations is evidence of Hall's well known axiom that "race is the modality in which class is lived,"[72] and Ruth Wilson Gilmore's definition of racism as state-sanctioned exploitation of "group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death."[73] Gilmore provides Clover theoretical footing to recognize the expansion of carceral management as a response to this crisis.[74] The riot, contends Clover, is the other to incarceration: "If the state's solution to the problem of crisis and surplus is carceral management, the riot is a contest entered directly against this solution —a counterproposal of unmanageability."[75] It is this unmanageability that excites Clover for the possibility of expanding the negation of capitalism. I will end with a discussion of Clover's idea of expanding of the riot, however it is useful to interject with K. Aarons commentary self-abolition.

Self-Abolition and the End of the World

In "No Selves to Abolish," K. Aarons gives shape to Clover's theoretical framework. Aarons' explicit task is to maintain an anarchist and communist revolutionary practice that responds to the problems presented by Afropessimism with some sensitivity. In short, Aarons is carefully trying to move through the impasse between Afropessimism and Marxism. Thus, for Aarons, the revolutionary project cannot be the program for new laws or the remaking of a new social body (what Wilderson characterizes as "trying to make the world better"), but instead should be "measured by our capacity to destitute the governmental and economic mechanisms of labor, and of the capture of life more broadly."[76] This destitution syncs with a refusal to envision a revolutionary practice as that which recovers a lost wholeness or retrieval of that which one has been deprived. The recovery of the complete self would, for Wilderson, reconstitute the schema of the Human which is animated by its anti-blackness. Aarons astutely recognizes a possibility for a liberatory practice located in the tension between autonomy and self-abolition. This is an anti-Leninist, anti-programmatic understanding of struggle,[77] one that surpasses exploitation and violence, not through empowerment or valorization, but through the "simultaneous abolition of the conditions of oppression and the social relations and the identities they produce: the liquidation rather than the consolidation of empowerment of identity."[78] Aarons underlines his point clearly:

> to the extent that struggles actively refuse to validate, affirm, or strengthen the forms of subjectivity presently produced under capitalism, [. . .] these struggles can be *potentially* aligned with—or at least, *less likely to stomp all over*—the Black struggle against its own objecthood. Self-abolition therefore constitutes the only possible horizon for a non-Black struggle that does not reinforce anti-Blackness. This leads to what might be characterized as a *negative identity politics*.[79]

Conclusion

The particular value of Debord's analysis on Watts is his deciphering of how the spectacle abstracts the blunt forces that support it. Debord helps us see that the police literally stand in the place of the commodity-economy. If commodity's hierarchy expands to the ends of the earth, the forces that protect it do so as well. In an era of uprisings, the State (the police) is the closest site of struggle as an extension of the economy.[80]

Debord's analysis of Watts also marks a very early pinpointing of two impulses present in recent riots. Joshua Clover explains the first of these impulses to be a kind of populism that attempts to enlarge the ranks of those in the streets through public sympathy. Those familiar with internal politics of activists will quickly recognize this first impulse in those who compulsively quote Martin Luther King Jr. in order to enforce a politics of nonviolent civil disobedience with an eye toward public opinion. This often involves requiring some kind of respectability politics and commonly leads to an electoral arena.

The second impulse present in the riot is "beyond or before communication" and turns less toward a polity and more toward practicalities, or what we might also refer to as a new form of direct action. "These practicalities might include looting, controlling space, eroding the power of the police, rendering an area unwelcoming to intruders, and destroying property understood to constitute the rioter's exclusion from the world they see always before them which they may not enter."[81] These two impulses are the division that describe the evident *rift* in the riot.

This rift will continue to widen and deepen because the spectacle has run out of promises —those who would "lead" an uprising for gains within the spectacle are increasingly unable to do so. Recall how we began: "*Do I think we can make it through rioting? Do you think we can make it through on promises!?"* Debord does his part to deepen this rift in vehement rejection of those who would try to control the riot or return the unruly character of the riot to something respectable, something manageable, or something governable. On the other hand, the elaboration of the rift that marks lived practice "beyond communicability" resonates with the Watts woman who opened this paper: "there is really nothing I can tell you." It was not through the ABC interview that she spoke, but the burning streets of Watts. Within the rift generated by the riot, her voice begins to sing. The contribution K. Aaron makes so eloquently to our original tension in liberatory politics is that fighting a common enemy does not mean we have the same experience with that enemy. The point is to produce moments within the rift that allow for different grammars of suffering to fight "social mediation through which Humanity and anti-Black capitalism as a whole is reproduced."[82] The deeper the rift becomes, the more we are able to re-make our struggles *through the abolition* of ourselves as well the spectacle.

Notes

1. "The Face of Watts," *ABC* Scope, ABC, January 22, 1966, YouTube video, posted by "retromanstv," accessed on November 10, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7JqhfZV-cms
2. "The Face of Watts."
3. Robin D.G. Kelly, "What Did Cedric Robinson Mean by 'Racial Capitalism,'" *Boston Review*, January 12, 2017, http://bostonreview.net/race/robin-d-g-kelley-what-did-cedric-robinson-mean-racial-capitalism.
4. To my knowledge, the only direct engagement with Debord's writings on racialized subjects is chapter 4 of Frances Stracey, *Constructed Situations: A New History of the Situationist International* (London: Pluto Press, 2014).

5. For a useful survey on communization, see *Endnotes #1: Preliminary Materials for a Balance Sheet of the 20th Century* (London: Endnotes, 2008); and Benjamin Noys, ed., *Communization and its Discontents: Contestation, Critique, and Contemporary Struggles* (Brooklyn: Minor Compositions, 2011).
6. "Bring Out Your Dead" in *Endnotes #1*, 14–5.
7. Gerald Horne, *Fire this Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1997), 3.
8. Horne, *Fire this Time,* 54–5.
9. Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 170–1.
10. "The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy" was originally published in in both French and English in December 1965, just four months after the riots, and distributed in the UK, the US, and France. It was republished in next issue of *Internationale Situationniste #10*, 1966. It is now available in English in *Situationist International Anthology*, ed. Ken Knabb (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006), 194–203
11. Debord, "The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy," 194–5.
12. Horne, *Fire this Time*, 66.
13. Ibid., 66.
14. Debord, "The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy," 196.
15. Ibid., 196.
16. Ibid.
17. Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 2004), thesis 4, 12; Karl Marx, *Capital Volume 1*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 932.
18. Anselm Jappe, *Guy Debord*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 19.
19. The Young-Girl might succinctly be described by Nina Power, who states: "Behind every Young-Girl's arse hides a bunch of rich white men: the task is surely not, then, to destroy the Young-Girl, but to destroy the system that makes her, and makes her so unhappy, whoever 'she' is." Nina Power, "She's Just not that into You," *Radical Philosophy* 177 (2013). For a thoughtful look at Debord's complicated use of images of women see chapter 6 in Stracey, *Constructed Situations*. On the Young-Girl see Tiqqun, *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl*, trans. Ariana Reines (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2013).
20. This paper closely analyzes the sequencing of Debord's film *The Society of the Spectacle* (1973) to illustrate his dialectical thinking. It should be noted that Martine Barraqué acted as editor to the film and is likely equally responsible for the sophistication of the sequencing, juxtapositions, and text's relationship to the images. As McKenzie Wark points out, she was so important to Debord, she receives a title card to herself. For more on Barraqué and her importance to Debord's film works, see chapter 13 of McKenzie Wark, *The Spectacle of Disintegration: Situationist Passages out of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso, 2013), 123–136.
21. Guy Debord, Script from "The Society of the Spectacle," in *Guy Debord: Complete Cinematic Works*, trans. Ken Knabb (Oakland: AK Press, 2003),thesis 35, 54.
22. Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, 127.

23. Ibid., 128.
24. Debord, Script from "The Society of the Spectacle," Thesis 36, 54. Debord is building upon Marx: "A commodity appears at first sight an extremely obvious, trivial thing. But its analysis brings out that it is a very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties.{ . . . . } But as soon as it emerges as a commodity, it changes into a *thing which transcends sensuousness*." Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, 163.
25. Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, 166.
26. Michael Heinrich, *An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital*, trans. Alexander Locascio (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2012), 73.
27. Debord, Script from "The Society of the Spectacle," 54–6.
28. Ibid., Thesis 41, 55.
29. Debord, "The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy," 199.
30. Debord, Script from "The Society of the Spectacle," Thesis 44, 55–56.
31. "To destitute power is to take away its legitimacy. { . . . } To force the police to be nothing more henceforth than a gang, and the justice system a criminal association. To destitute power is to bring it back down to earth." Invisible Committee, *To Our Friends,* trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Semiotext(e), 2015), 75–76.
32. Jappe, *Guy Debord*, 15.
33. Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, Thesis 47, 32 (emphasis added). One can trace "augmented survival" throughout Debord's text. See in particular Theses 40, 44, 47, 150.
34. Debord, Script from "The Society of the Spectacle," 95. This excerpt of the film will also be coupled with a scene of riots in which "young lumpen proletarians" defend a factory from the French riot police from the rooftop, Debord, Script from "The Society of the Spectacle," 57. Following the sequence in Watts, Debord provides images of "French national riot police being trained in street fighting," followed by "More riot police maneuvers: Police costumed as radicals raise a barricade and wave black flags. Their colleagues easily take the barricade." Both sequences following the footage from Watts should be read as a dialectical and direct response to the Watts insurrection. Debord re-emphasizes it is a *war*, and the police (protectors of spectacle) are preparing and strategizing.
35. Debord, "The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy," 201.
36. Ibid., 196.
37. Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, Thesis 153, 112.
38. Debord, "The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy," 198.
39. Ibid., 200.
40. Debord writes: "The blacks in fact function as a perfect spectacular object-lesson: the threat of falling into such wretchedness spurs others on in the rat-race." The reference to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* is primarily the translator's doing as the original French does not share the phrase. Nonetheless, this statement is almost verbatim what we might hear from Fanon or Frank Wilderson, who I will discuss below in the second half of the paper. Debord, "The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy," 200.
41. Debord, "The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy," 199.
42. Ibid., 200.
43. This difference is also the political distance between Debord's *representation* of Watts in his film and his analysis and *contribution to* the struggle of Watts written in

1965. The film can only offer representation, a look backward, and act in theoretical and affective proximity to the actions of the insurgents in Watts. The film can only tell us what we can learn from Watts, it cannot start any revolutions. Only when these theoretical advancements offered by Debord are met by the *practical actions* of the proletariat can a historical break occur. Thus, Debord understood the pamphlet as an attempt to clarify theoretical confusions inherent in the revolutionary moment brought on by Watts, while the film reflects on why this moment occurred in the first place. For more on Debord's dialectical interplay between history, theory, and action see in particular Theses 131 and 203 in *The Society of the Spectacle*, 96, 143.

44. Debord, "The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy," 200.
45. Ibid., 202.
46. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 1–17; Frank Wilderson III, *Red, White, & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 18.
47. Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 21; Wilderson, *Red, White, & Black*, 59.
48. Frank Wilderson III, "The Prison Slave as Hegemony's (Silent) Scandal," *Social Justice* 30, no. 2 (2003), 23 (emphasis added).
49. Debord, "The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy," 201.
50. Wilderson, "The Prison Slave as Hegemony's (Silent) Scandal," 22.
51. Wilderson, *Red, White, & Black*, 249.
52. Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (film). Debord primarily makes this argument implicitly through his use of imagery in the film. He uses each of these images similar to how he uses the images of Watts as described above. In my reading, each of these instances in Debord's film marks an unironic depiction of revolutionary struggles that offer kernels of historical truth with regard to revolutionary possibility.
53. Wilderson, *Red, White, & Black*, 249.
54. Wilderson, "The Prison Slave as Hegemony's (Silent) Scandal," 25–6.
55. Ibid. It is important to note that Wilderson arrives at this position through a belief that the black body is exiled in a social death in the face of a civil society that relies on a (white) workers dialectical relationship to capitalism in America. The Slave and subsequent black subject has never been part of this equation. While the black population has historically been the subject to resolve the over-accumulation crisis, it nonetheless falls outside of the capitalist matrix. See Wilderson, "Gramsci's Black Marx: Whither the Slave in Civil Society?," *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 9, no. 2 (2003).
56. Wilderson, *Red, White, & Black*, 20–21.
57. Ibid., 18 (emphasis added).
58. Interview with Frank Wilderson, "We are Trying to Destroy the World: Anti-Blackness and Police Violence after Ferguson," (ill will editions, 2014), http://ill-will-editions.tumblr.com/post/103584583009/were-trying-to-destroy-the-world. Interview transcript of radio interview with imixwhatilike, available at https://imixwhatilike.org/2014/10/01/frankwildersonandantiblackness-2/, accessed May 25, 2016.
59. Debord, "The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy," 202.
60. For scholarship on this point see Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York: Vintage, 1999). This sentiment became so commonplace at the height of Black Lives Matter that the *New York Times Magazine* ran a cover story entitled "Our Demand is Simple: Stop Killing Us," in May 2015. The complexity of the *New York Times* doing a cover story on two

"leaders" of BLM deserves its own article. Jay Caspian Kang, "Our Demand is Simple: Stop Killing Us," *New York Times Magazine*, May 4, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/10/magazine/our-demand-is-simple-stop-killing-us.html?_r=0.

61. Jason E. Smith, introduction to *The Winter is over: Writings on Transformation Denied, 1989–1995* by Toni Negri (New York: Semiotext(e), 2013), 19.
62. Joshua Clover, *Riot. Strike. Riot* (New York: Verso, 2016), 126.
63. Ibid., 125.
64. Debord, "The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy," 197.
65. Clover, *Riot. Strike. Riot,* 26, 165.
66. *Endnotes #2: Misery and the Value Form*, (London: Endnotes, 2010), 30.
67. Clover, *Riot. Strike. Riot,* 160. Clover quotes and draws on Gilles Dauvé, *Eclipse and Re-emergence of the Communist Movement* (Oakland: PM Press, 2015), 47. Debord is also relevant here, particularly Thesis 115 from *The Society of the Spectacle*:

    > Signs of a new and growing tendency toward negation proliferate in the more economically advanced countries. The spectacular system reacts to these signs with incomprehension or attempts to misrepresent them, but they are sufficient proof that a new period has begun. After the failure of the working class's first subversive assault on capitalism, we are now witness to the *failure of capitalist abundance*. On the one hand, we see anti-union struggles of Western workers that have to be repressed (primarily by the unions themselves); at the same time rebellious tendencies among the young generate a protest that is still tentative and amorphous, yet already clearly embodies a rejection of the specialized sphere of the old politics, as well as art and everyday life. These are two sides of the same coin, both emerging under the sign of *criminality*, both portents of a second proletarian onslaught of class society. (85–6, emphasis in original).

    I call attention to this Thesis from Debord to note his excitement for the potential revolutionary character of those that reject union struggles, here representative of the traditional proletarian strategy, as well as the dangerous class represented by the "criminality" Debord associates with the second proletarian assault on class society. I am not a sociologist sensitive to histories of the racialization of the criminal in France, yet Debord's use of the term gives me pause. This point warrants further interrogation with regards to its relationship to the Other, both as a racialized figure as well as the figure that exists outside the legal infrastructure of capitalism.
68. Clover, *Riot. Strike. Riot,* 165.
69. Ibid., 165.
70. With regard to his analysis of surplus population, Clover draws heavily from Ruth Wilson Gilmore and Frantz Fanon as well as the rich tradition of black liberation including, but not limited to, The Black Panther Party, Revolutionary Action Movement, and the Revolutionary League of Black Workers.
71. Clover, *Riot. Strike. Riot,* 166.
72. Stuart Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (London: Macmillan, 1978), 394.
73. Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 28.
74. Ibid., 28.
75. Clover, *Riot. Strike. Riot,* 162–3.

76. K. Aarons, "No Selves to Abolish: Afropessimism, Anti-politics, and the End of the World," in *Hostis #2 Beyond Recognition* (Berkeley: LBC Books, 2016), 116.
77. On the communist rejection of the program, see "Bring Out Your Dead" in *Endnotes #1,* 2–19. Succinctly, the communist program can be understood as the movement for the liberation of work by way of affirming the goals of the workers movement to seize power and therefore become the new ruling class.
78. Aarons, "No Selves to Abolish," 120.
79. Ibid., 121.
80. Clover, *Riot. Strike. Riot,* 125–126.
81. Ibid., 184–185.
82. Aarons, "No Selves to Abolish," 127.

Bio



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Heath Schultz is a research-based artist and writer. His work addresses questions of institutional critique, activism, contemporary politics, and the political efficacy of art. His writing has been published in the *Journal of Artistic Research, Parallax,* and the *Journal of Aesthetics and Protest*, in addition to various DIY publications. His work has been shown at the New Zealand Film Archive, Auckland, New Zealand; Visual Arts Center, Austin; Experimental Response Cinema, Austin; and Plains Art Museum, Fargo, ND, to name a few. He is an assistant professor of art at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. You can view his work at heathschultz.com.

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"Who is this man who is distinct from this citizen?" Revisiting Marx's Critique of Liberal Rights

Martin Moorby

ABSTRACT Steven Lukes argues that Karl Marx underestimated the importance of human rights. For Lukes, Marx treated human rights only as expressions of the egoism and individualism of bourgeois society and, in doing so, underestimated both the danger of arbitrary political power and the protection afforded by individual rights. My first aim in this essay is to show four substantial problems with Lukes' reading of "On the Jewish Question," the text that Lukes finds to contain the "roots" of Marx's view. My second aim is to argue that—a hundred and fifty years after the publication of *Capital*—a re-assessment of the marginality of rights in Marx's thought is overdue. There is nothing in Marx's thought that should discourage socialists from demanding such rights and this essay finds that this is not a connection between Marxism and socialism that needs severing.

Introduction[1]

In his widely read article "Can a Marxist Believe in Human Rights?" and subsequent book *Marxism and Morality*, Steven Lukes argued that Marx was hostile to human rights.[2] Lukes contributed to a lively debate over whether Marx condemned capitalism as *unjust* and specifically to the question of how human rights fit into the framework of Marx's thought. This debate over the role of justice in Marx's thought arose from how, on the one hand, Marx rejects socialist critiques of capitalism that appeal to universal moral standards, maintaining that moral standards are socially and historically situated in social formations and relative to that mode of production. According to one reading, Marx shows in *Capital* that the capitalist purchase and employment of labor-power—however contrary to the class interests of the proletariat—do not involve any violation of the rights and moral standards inherent in the capitalist mode of production. On the other hand, however, Marx's condemnation of capitalism often appears to have either an implicit or explicit moral content.[3] Lukes argued that Marx rejected "the morality of *Recht*" based on concepts of justice, fairness, rights, and obligations that Marx regarded as inherent to particular modes of production (although Lukes maintains that Marx nevertheless valued freedom, social unity, and self-realization).[4] For Lukes, Marx treated human rights only as expressions of the egoism and individualism of bourgeois society and, as they were only necessitated by conflicting economic interests within class societies, communist society could dispense with rights.[5] According to Lukes, Marx dangerously underestimated the protection afforded by individual rights as moral constraints on goal-directed behavior.[6] Lukes offers not "another anti-marxist tract" but a "diagnostic" of "congenital defects" of

Marxism,[7] concluding that Marx's position is incompatible with defending human rights and therefore Marxism and socialism should sever this link with Marx's thought.[8]

Some of the responses to Lukes focused on the question of whether a Marxist should believe in human rights or on Lukes' understanding of the Marxist tradition.[9] This essay shall contribute to the section of the literature that Lukes' reading fails to do justice to Marx's critique of rights and liberalism.[10] This is important because, a hundred and fifty years since the publication of the first volume of *Capital*, the suspicion around Marx's attitudes towards rights persists and the claim that Marx was hostile to the very idea of rights remains, as David Leopold put it, "an interpretative commonplace."[11] In this essay, I challenge Lukes' interpretation and show that there is no evidence that Marx was hostile to the very idea of rights. Since Lukes finds the "roots" of Marx's supposedly "impoverished" view of human rights in "On the Jewish Question," the first part of this essay shows four problems with his reading of this text.[12] After noting, as other commentators have, that Marx does not critique all rights as egoistic and indeed values some rights, for example citizens' rights, I discuss a second issue: Marx both criticizes citizens' rights as limited in their current form and recognizes a progressive aspect to the rights of man. My alternative reading, and the contribution of this essay to this section of the literature, is that Marx in "On the Jewish Question" criticizes rights in relation to a teleological conception of social and historical progress. I conclude this section of the essay by noting that while Marx finds the idea that individual rights are "natural" alienating because it externalizes a product of the human mind, this does not mean he did not consider the winning of rights to be important victories in the historical struggle for freedom, and that Marx's critique of arbitrary political power (both between feudal master and servant and in the instrumental relations of bourgeois civil society) is a central problem of his political thought, especially of his writings from this period.

In the second section of the essay, I turn to Marx's critique in *Capital* of the "very Eden of the innate rights of man." I show that Marx's critique of rights in the sphere of capital circulation is not a critique of rights *per se*, not least because an important part of his critique is that the establishment of these rights requires the dispossession of pre-capitalist rights. Marx treats rights as legal relations internally related to political forces, forms of consciousness, social relations, and productive forces specific to certain historical moments, not universal or timeless. His critique of rights in *Capital*, then, is first and foremost a critique of the historically specific rights that underpin bourgeois political economy, not a critique of rights as expressions of egoism.

1. The rights of man and the rights of the citizen

Marx wrote "On the Jewish Question" in 1843–4, shortly before he produced his first communist texts.[13] Marx examines the rights proclaimed in the French Declarations of 1789 and 1793 and in the state constitutions of Pennsylvania and New Hampshire. He concludes:

> Therefore not one of the so-called rights of man goes beyond egoistic man, man as a member of civil society, namely an individual withdrawn into himself, his private interest and his private desires and separated from the community . . . The only bond which holds them together is natural necessity, need and private interest, the conservation of their property and their egoistic persons.[14]), 230.]

This comment and others like it provide the basis for Lukes' reading of the text and his claim that Marx's later writings inherit a dismissive attitude towards rights. Here, Marx critiques the rights to liberty, equality, and security as fundamentally the rights of the owner of private property to enjoy and dispose of goods, revenues, and fruits of labor

according to arbitrary will and self-interest—without regard for, or interference from, others. Equal treatment under the law and security guarantee this individual freedom to all property owners.[15]

Lukes understands Marx's critique as treating rights as merely the expressions of the egoism and individualism of bourgeois civil society. He construes rights as "typically the basis for claims by individuals to be treated in certain ways: rights offer the *interests* of these individuals as sufficient grounds for holding another or others to be under an obligation to treat them in certain ways"[16] and understands *human rights* to override other goals (such as the accumulation of value in a capitalist economy) or less central rights.[17] As Lukes argues, "taking some rights seriously is positively to demand a certain form of social life in which social relationships flourish free of arbitrary power. To think of them merely as expressing the egoism of civil society and the contradictions between civil society and the state is precisely to fail to take them seriously." [18] Lukes concentrates on what are often categorized "first generation" civil and political rights, as well as economic and social rights or "second generation rights." But, as Christopher Boyd points out, "[a]cceptance of the modern recognition of the heterogeneity of rights is an important step in the realisation that whether Marx believed in human rights is a different question from whether a Marxist can believe in human rights."[19] So-called "third generation" solidarity rights are claimed by groups or even by humanity and are thus not reflective of an inherent egoistic individualism.

Lukes follows Marx who, writing in the nineteenth century, concentrated on "first generation" rights. Lukes points to how not all the rights guaranteed in the American constitution and the French declarations can be easily called "egoistic" in the way Marx claims. Freedom of speech, the presumption of innocence, and protection from arbitrary arrest are "passed over in silence" by Marx because, Lukes supposes, they cannot be easily construed as bourgeois and "do not lend themselves to his interpretation."[20] To support this reading, Lukes quotes Marx as writing that "the so-called rights of man" are "simply the rights of the member of society, that is of egoistic man, of man separated from other men, and from the community."[21] This is not, however, the full passage. What Marx actually writes is "the so-called *rights of man*, as distinct from the *rights of the citizen*, are quite simply the rights of *the member of society*, i.e. of egoistic man."[22] The first problem, then, with Lukes' reading is how it omits this important distinction within what we can call "first generation" rights. Marx describes citizens' rights as "political rights, rights which are only exercised in community with others . . . [in] participation in the political community or state. They come under the category of political freedom, of civil rights." After this brief acknowledgement, Marx turns to "consider the other aspect, the *droits d'homme*, as distinct from the *droits d'citoyen*."[23]

The full passage shows that Marx refers to two sub-categories of rights: the rights of the member of civil society that he critiques as "egoistic" and the rights of the citizen that he treats as rights of participation in the political community. As Amy Bartholomew has noted, this full passage shows that Marx's critique of rights as egoistic does not apply to all rights.[24] Marx does not claim this distinction as his own, but made in the French Declarations. As David Leopold has noted, Marx rather unhelpfully uses the label *Menschenrechte* to refer to both rights generally and the rights of man, but the distinction is clear enough in the text.[25] Marx's example of a citizens' right is freedom of religious conscience (given the context of Jewish emancipation), although he could have as easily chosen freedom of speech, assembly, and the right to participate in the formation of the law, i.e. examples of rights Lukes claims Marx ignores. As well as defending the right of religious conscience, Marx criticized the subordination of citizens' rights under "egoistic" rights, and criticized the way the modern state acted as the guardian of

bourgeois civil society and not of its own avowed ideals. He cites censorship in revolutionary France as an example of the modern state willingly sacrificing the freedoms it idealizes for "public security," showing the state to be fundamentally the guardian of bourgeois civil society and in contradiction with its own avowed ideals.[26] When, in the published introduction to his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1844), Marx criticizes how Germany "combine[s] the civilised defects of the modern political world, whose advantages we lack, with the barbaric defects of the *ancien régime*, of which we have our full measure," he specifically cites "combining the torments of censorship with the torments of the French September Laws."[27] His citing of the French September Laws of 1835, which restricted freedom of the press and the powers of juries, shows how Marx valued certain rights and distrusted the modern state's commitment to protecting them. This was not the first time Marx defended the freedom of the press either—he criticized censorship as a journalist in 1842.[28] Lukes recognizes that Marx does defend individual rights in his writings; what the distinction between the rights of man and the rights of the citizen shows is that, contra Lukes, Marx's defence is not inconsistent with his critique of "egoistic rights" (indeed, Marx supported rights that went further than these citizens' rights, discussed below).[29]

Marx still criticizes the winning of citizens' rights as a limited or merely political form of emancipation and he even recognizes a progressive side to these "egoistic" rights. I argue that understanding Marx's position requires recognizing the teleological view of history he defended in these early democratic republican writings, when he remained in some respects a young Hegelian.[30] According to this view, universal, rational freedom was the final cause or end to the development of human society, which in the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* Marx identified with "true democracy."[31] In "On the Jewish Question," the final end of the political and social developments he identifies is "human emancipation." Political emancipation (the process involving the separation of state from society, and the transformation of religion into private faith—of which the contemporary debate over Jewish emancipation served as a prime example) is "a big step forward . . . [it] may not be the last form of general human emancipation, but it is the last form of emancipation within the prevailing scheme of things."[32] Human emancipation consists in overcoming the contradiction between the state and civil society, and the citizen and the egoistic individual—reconciling human beings with the social world they have created. Instead of being restricted by these social contradictions, human beings can self-determine or freely shape the social world according to their nature. Therefore, Marx in 1843–4 is not against rights *per se* but judges their value in relation to historical progress understood in this sense.[33] This shows that Marx did not simply criticize bourgeois society for failing to live up to its own standards but critiqued, in characteristically Young Hegelian fashion, bourgeois society for both its contradictions and how these contradictions contain the potentiality for the realization of freedom in a new form of society.

To see the full picture, then, Marx's critique of the historical limitations of bourgeois society has to be placed alongside his recognition of its historical achievements. Marx treated political emancipation as historically progressive because productive life under feudalism was simultaneously political for being organized in terms of social rank, with membership of estates, guilds, and corporations existing as "separate societies within society."[34] For Marx, this meant a servile form of social existence under a feudal master. In his letters to Arnold Ruge published in the *Deutsch-französische Jarbücher* alongside "On the Jewish Question" and the introduction, Marx attacks the "hereditary masters" of the estate who act as "slave-owners" and treat the people on their estate as a "breed of slaves or a stud of horses."[35] Marx objects to such objectification and subordination under an arbitrary power and regards the establishment of the modern republic, a general

community of *citizens* with universal rights, as a progressive step forward.[36] The establishment of a separate political sphere allowed for a civil society based on formally non-political (Marx recognizes their informal political character), instrumental relations between egoistic individuals.[37] Marx characterizes the "egoistic" life in bourgeois civil society as both a liberation and a "reduction."[38] This liberating aspect refers to the dissolution of the old estates, guilds, and corporations, which allowed—as Marx sympathetically quotes Hegel in the *Critique*—"personal choice of [one's] station in life" or for the activity in civil society to be mediated by individuality and self-interest.[39] While this progressive aspect may include the universalization of property rights, the universalization of these property relations reduces the members of civil society into egoistic individuals. Indeed, Marx writes that "[p]olitical emancipation is the reduction of man on the one hand to the member of civil society, the *egoistic*, *independent* individual, and on the other to the *citizen*, the moral person."[40] Marx critiques this social division and the way that the universal political association based on citizens' rights consoles the individuals of civil society for the lack of community in their everyday, productive lives in a way comparable to religious consolation. Marx argues that final human emancipation will only be achieved once "real, individual man resumes the abstract citizen into himself" and that human powers and relationships are reorganized as social forces.[41]

Bartholomew is right to note that Marx's criticism of the rights of this commercial civil society was that not one of them "*goes beyond* egoistic man."[42] For Marx, it is *insufficient* because it dissolves these communities, however oppressive they were, leaving human beings to act in the market as individuals. It is true that Marx finds that these external relations between human beings as egoistic individuals "cannot sustain the individual as a member of a community, as a communal being."[43] But, contrary to Lukes, the problem Marx finds with bourgeois civil society is not simply its lack of community. It is the way that participating in a market means being treated instrumentally by others, and treating them alike in return, and how this creates a new form dependence on an egoistic or arbitrary will. This new form of dependence in bourgeois civil society—"the slavery of egoistic need"—is more impersonal than in feudalism because laborers are not tied to any one private property owner but dependent on the market.[44] The universalization of property rights generalizes a new set of class relations. In the "Critique of Hegel," Marx recognizes the precarious position of the propertyless "class of immediate labour" whose life in this civil society is in large part determined by the vicissitudes of the market.[45] The "domination of private property and money" has debased everything, Marx writes in "On the Jewish Question," into an object of exchange, including human beings.[46] They are "the plaything of alien powers."[47] "On the Jewish Question" also emphasizes how this dependence on the arbitrary will of another is not tied to any one particular person, as in the *ancien regime,* but is instead experienced as a generalized subordination under money:

> As long as man is restrained by religion he can objectify his essence only by making it into an *alien*, fantastic being. In the same way, when under the sway of egoistic need he can act practically and practically produce objects only by making his products and his activity subordinate to an alien substance and giving them the significance of an alien substance—money.[48]

Political emancipation, then, liberated human beings from the servitude under the *ancien regime*. However, the modern dualism of an externalized state and bourgeois civil society had created new forms of alienation and servitude. Marx therefore defends what he sees as the progressive aspects of this transformation and critiques the limits. He does this because one of his aims of the essay was to defend Jewish entitlement to both the rights of the citizen and the "egoistic" rights of bourgeois civil society. Frederick Wilhelm IV had

in part reignited debate on Jewish emancipation by proposing to reintroduce Jewries in 1841 as a way of realizing his romantic ideals of medieval Christian Prussia.[49] For Marx, the exclusion of Jews was a vestige of the old order that enforced a society of separate societies and an anathema to his political views. In a letter explaining why he had agreed to help Jews in Cologne with a particular petition, he wrote "[t]he point is to punch as many holes in the Christian state and smuggle in rational views as far as we can."[50]

This aim required a response to Bruno Bauer's radical attack on Jewish emancipation. Bauer, a Young Hegelian philosopher and theologian who had been Marx's teacher and friend in Berlin, was drawn into this debate over Frederick Wilhelm's proposal after an exchange between between Carl Hermes, editor of the *Kölnische Zeitung* and Ludwig Philippson, editor of the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*. Bauer argued, contrary to both liberals and conservatives, that Christians and Jews were not in a position to grant and receive freedom respectively, which responded to the concerns that both camps had on the implications of emancipation on the Christian nature of Prussia and whether Jews were fit to become citizens.[51] Bauer's argument was that, given how the rights entitled to Christians were privileges on the basis of birth and grace, and since extending such privileges to non-Christians would be a contradiction in the eyes of Christians, the Jewish demand that Christians compromised their religious identity while Jewish people clung to theirs was hypocritical. Bauer demanded that both Jews and Christians should renounce religion and demand universal rights recognizing their humanity. Additionally, he criticized Judaism as an "oriental" religion that fostered a self-segregating form of consciousness with a materialistic and irrational attachment to ritual and law.[52] Marx entered the debate to defend Jewish entitlement to rights by pointing out that freedom of religious conscience is a right won on the basis of common humanity and thus there was nothing hypocritical about their demand for the same rights as other citizens, while wanting to keep their religion.[53] At the same time, Marx insisted, that the secular state created the legal framework for the renewed flourishing of religion as a private faith revealed the persistence of social alienation. Therefore, he wanted to both argue for Jewish entitlement to universal rights, implying their value, while also pointing out how far political emancipation fell short of real, human emancipation.

Marx *does* agree with Bauer that rights are not natural. He approvingly quotes Bauer's claim that rights are rather "the product of culture" and "the prize of the struggle against the accident of birth and the privileges which history has handed down from generation to generation" and he tends to refer to these rights as the "so-called rights of man."[54] Therefore, the third problem with Lukes' reading concerns Marx's contempt for the description of the rights of bourgeois civil society as natural. For Lukes, this serves as further evidence of his hostility towards rights but this does not recognize how Marx treated rights as important victories in what he saw as the struggle for freedom. Marx found the celebration of rights as natural to be an undignified act of self-alienation because, as with religious consciousness, it externalizes a product of the human mind as an alien other with an independent, natural existence.[55] Treating rights as natural obscures from humanity its own agency in the world, its own historical achievements, and the need to complete the task of realizing freedom in the social world through a democratic transformation of society. Marx objected to how the rights of the egoistic owner of private property, who treats others as means to his or her own ends, are naturalized, or, how their interests are presented as universal rights. In this way, Marx insists on treating rights as specific to certain forms of society and objects to misrepresenting rights as *human* rights.

Finally, Lukes argues that Marx's critique of the rights of man shows he underestimates the importance of how rights act as "side constraints" or set limits to social policies and to

the individual pursuit of goals.[56] But, as we have seen, Marx is both aware of how rights helped liberate human beings from subordination under the old regime and repositioned individuals as dependent on the bourgeois owner of private property and the arbitrariness of the market. Marx chose to critique the rights of man, at least in part, because they provided the legal framework for this new system of subordination. In his "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," Marx had rejected what he saw as the arbitrary power of the monarchy, aristocracy, and bureaucracy of Hegel's state. Furthermore, he rejected the division of society into egoistic civil society on the one hand and an abstract association of citizens on the other. He argued instead for a "true democracy" that would dissolve the externalization of the political association from civil society. Contrary to Hegel, Marx thought that a society governed by universal and impartial laws and conventions could only be realized through democratic means, including an elected legislature[57] and replacing professional bureaucracy with citizen participation,[58] rather than through Hegel's "enlightened" institutions. Freedom required the people to choose their laws rather than having laws imposed on them by a particular individual or group who treat the state as their private property.[59] Furthermore, democratic participation through universal suffrage would reunite civil society with the political association and reunite individuals with their political identities as citizens. Boyd rightly notes, "If Marxism is compatible with human rights, it is the task of the Marxist to determine how rights may be involved in taking 'the abstract citizen back into himself,' as Marxism requires" and the right to vote, along with the other citizens' rights, fit this criterion.[60] This radical, democratic republican argument underlines the importance Marx attributed to the rights of the citizen:[61] to realize a universal, rational freedom based on impartial laws required, in his analysis, a democratic community and this required winning rights that enable such participation, such as freedom of conscience, speech and the press, assembly, and—importantly—the right to vote.[62] The freedom with others in a true democracy requires these rights. But universal democratic participation in the formation and implementation of laws for Marx prevented the domination of the state by the arbitrary interests or personalities of particular individuals or groups.

In "On the Jewish Question," Marx assumes that no self-respecting democracy would tolerate a sphere of generalized impersonal subordination or dependency. He assumes instead that a democratic community of self-ruling citizens would reject this distinction between politics and civil society, or the political and supposedly non-political, and ultimately this distinction between the rights of the citizen and the rights of man that expresses and mystifies it—"[w]ho is this man," he asks, "who is distinct from this citizen?"[63] For many commentators, this would amount to illiberal, political interference in civil society.[64] For Marx, this would be an attempt by a democratic community to free itself from subordination under arbitrary power.[65] What I find interesting is that Marx's support of citizens' rights, as rights of participation in the community, raises questions about whether he anticipated this dualism of rights being replaced by rights to participate in both public administration and productive life and what those rights might have been.

2. Marx's critique of rights in *Capital*

The section above refuted Lukes' interpretation of "On the Jewish Question" as showing hostility towards rights. But the significance Lukes attributed to this text was that it formed the "roots" of a later hostility towards rights. I have found no reason to think that Marx's writings after his adoption of communism inherited an earlier, dismissive conception of rights and this section will show this by examining Marx's critique in volume I of Capital of the sphere of circulation in Capitalism as the "Eden of the rights of man."[66]

The sphere of circulation in capitalism refers to the exchange of commodities, including the capacity to labor, or labor-power. Marx describes this sphere as "a very Eden of the innate rights of man. It is the exclusive realm of Freedom, Equality, Property, and Bentham." He continues in a well-known passage:

> Freedom, because both buyer and seller of a commodity, let us say of labour-power, are determined only by their own free will. They contract as free persons, who are equal before the law . . . Equality, because each enters into relation with the other, as with a simple owner of commodities, and their exchange equivalent for equivalent. Property, because each disposes only of what is his own. And Bentham, because each looks only to his own advantage… this sphere of simple circulation . . . provides the "free-trader *vulgaris*" with his views, his concepts and the standard by which he judges the society of capital and wage-labour.[67]

The exchange of commodities, then, requires certain rights to take place, particularly rights of ownership over commodities. Marx's treatment of the ideals of freedom and equality as fundamentally the freedom and equality of owners of private property recalls his critique in "On the Jewish Question." Lukes' claim is that Marx critiqued all rights because they express the individualism of capitalism and this passage, particularly the swipe against Bentham, may seem to support this reading. However, Marx's view is that bourgeois rights require the alienation of the traditional rights of laborers. The "free-trader *vulgaris*" takes these rights and the ideals they embody as universal but Marx treats them as a part of specific historical circumstances and as ideological.[68] The freedom of the laborer to own and sell their labor-power to whomever they choose, for a certain period of time, is a case in point. This is a historically specific right because it requires the externalization of formal, political relations from the economic structure of society, absolving laborers from political obligations, such as those that tied the serf to the lord and estate. To be sure, the establishment of the right to own property, including both one's own labor-power and the means of production, as a supposedly natural right marks a significant historical departure in the universalization of rights and their mystification of natural expresses this universalization. But in capitalism, these universal property rights reproduce a class structure through the universalization of property relations over labor-power, the means of production, and the surplus value produced by the worker but owned by the capitalist. This bourgeois freedom also involves being "free" of the land or being separated from the means of reproducing life, which obliges those with only their labor-power to sell to enter the sphere of circulation looking for employment.[69] Bourgeois political economy explained the social division between capitalists and workers in terms of the natural inequality of talents, frugality, and work ethic, and Marx dedicates some of the most memorable chapters in *Capital* to show how this sphere of exchange is actually predicated on a process of separation "written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire."[70] Marx presents this process of separating producers from land, and land from producers, or primitive accumulation, as a violent process, involving enclosure, forced evictions, brutal state punishments, genocide, and colonialism.[71] Taking the British Isles as his case study, Marx describes how they transformed lands used for subsistence farming for generations were forcibly transformed into commercial sheep farms (not to mention hunting grounds for the nobility). Along with the disbanding of feudal retainers and the dissolution of the monasteries, Marx explains that the initial waves of expropriation in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were driven to expand the English wool industry. After the abolition of serfdom, these estates had become embedded in commercial relations and the enclosures violated the traditional system interpersonal dependence under which the peasants could rightfully claim to live on the estate.[72] This is important because it shows how Lukes' interpretation that rights for Marx can only

express bourgeois individualism is mistaken. For Marx, the creation of bourgeois rights was a violent attack on traditional rights that were based on customary usage and multiple claims on the land. Indeed, Marx notes how these enclosures were initially illegal. Primitive accumulation, then, was part and parcel of the separation of the political from the productive that was central in establishing capitalism. Primitive accumulation amounted to theft of land and the alienation of the customary rights of the immediate producers,[73] and it turned the former into constant capital and the latter into "*rightless* proletarians" (emphasis added) or—from the perspective capital accumulation—variable capital.[74]

This shows that Marx does *not* critique rights *per se* as expressions of individualism. He treats rights as legal relations that are internally connected to the class structure and forces of production, not to mention forms of the state and social consciousness. That is, he treats the form and functioning of legal relations as explicable only in relation to these other moments as a totality or ensemble. When one is examined, it reveals the others because they co-evolve together.[75] His critique of primitive accumulation shows how the bourgeois right to own the means of production privately were established by attacking the feudal system of customary rights based on common use and traditional ties to the estate. Of course, Marx recognizes the abolition of serfdom and the achievement of self-ownership as a positive side to this development. Therefore, the problem is *not* with rights *per se*; the problem is that the specific rights of bourgeois society are are predicated on making the former immediate producers *wage-slaves* or producers dependent on wages for the reproduction of their lives. In "On the Jewish Question," Marx critiqued the dependence of the property-less laborer on the egoistic will of the bourgeois owner of private property. In *Capital*, he critiques the dependency of the worker on the social relation of value personified by the capitalist.[76]

This reading will be disputed by some because it implies that Marx criticized capitalism as unjust. Referring to the passage quoted above, and to others,[77] some commentators argue that because Marx made the theoretical assumption that labor-power was *generally* exchanged in capitalism for its value—the cost of reproducing labor-power—Marx showed how the capitalists' extraction of surplus-value from the proletariat is *consistent* with their holding the rights of freedom of exchange, equality under the law, and with notions of fairness and justice within capitalism.[78] This is because it is a free exchange of equivalent for equivalent by rightful owners of property and while it may involve the extraction of surplus-value, it is not *unjust*. Proponents of this view, then, understand Marx's critique of rights and by extension moral standards as corresponding to, or conditioned by, a certain mode of production to mean that the only standard of justice applicable to capitalism is the one that accords with the capitalist mode of production.[79] Nevertheless, there is a great deal of textual evidence of Marx condemning the extraction of surplus-value as a form of robbery, which implies an injustice in a non-capitalist sense.[80] It has been persuasively argued that Marx shows in the passage quoted above that it is the bourgeois "free-trader *vulgaris*" who thinks that capitalist exchange is performed on the basis of freedom, equality, and justice. Marx's critique shows this to be a superficial view, reminding his reader that these require the proletariat experience wage-dependency and the loss of independent access to the means of production. As for the fact that labor-power can produce more value than required to reproduce it, this means that part of the working-day is unpaid labor-time; this unequal exchange only appears an equal one superficially in the sphere of circulation, and only in the eyes of the "free-trader *vulgaris*."[81] Moral standards are therefore not only conditioned by the mode of production but by the class structure of society and are contested along class lines.[82] Moreover, as Sean Sayers has convincingly argued, for Marx the capitalist mode of production has also produced the material basis for a socialist mode of production and

different moral standards that correspond to it, which means that bourgeois moral standards can be challenged by socialists as unjust without false appeal to universal moral truths.[83] Marx's position is underpinned by an idea of historical *progress*; namely that human needs, capacities, and powers as progressively developed by the successive social formations in history.[84] As should be clear, this idea of historical progress in Marx's materialist conception of history should not be identified with the idea of progress in "On the Jewish Question," which was written before Marx developed this conception of history and indeed became a communist.

Marx's argument in *Capital* implies that an alternative set of new legal relations would be needed for "an association of free men, working with the means of production held in common."[85] The "Critique of the Gotha Programme" (written 1875) confirms this. Marx's criticism of the vague Lassallean demand in the draft program of the German socialists for "a fair distribution of the proceeds of labour"[86]—and his reminder to the Lassalleans that distribution under capitalism is consistent with the standards of fairness based on the present mode of production—has been cited as evidence that Marx did not view capitalism as unjust.[87] "Right," he argues, "can never be higher than the economic structure of society and its cultural development conditioned thereby."[88] But his main point is that the standards of distributive justice of a society are internally related to the mode of production. A cooperative mode of production reusing organization and technological development from capitalism would be "still stamped with the birth marks of the old society from whose womb it emerges." Thus in the lower phase of communism, the labor certificates the individual receives for their contribution to the common stock of use-values continues to reflect the amount of labor they have contributed, and therefore their natural abilities. While class differences have been abolished in this society, this form of distribution cannot take into account the differences in individual needs. Its limitation is that this "equal right is an unequal right for unequal labour," as Marx puts it. This will benefit some over others. "To avoid all these defects," he claims, "*right instead of being equal would have to be unequal*"; that is, the right to use-values will need to be based on these individual needs.[89] This would be the form of distribution that would correspond to the higher phase of communism, a mode of production in which "the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labor . . . has vanished" and in which "labor has become not only a means of life but life's prime want," possible if "the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly." "[O]nly then," he concludes, "can the narrow horizon of *bourgeois* right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: from each according to his ability to each according to his needs!"[90]

Marx critiques the Lassallean program by insisting that distribution cannot be considered in isolation from production, or that rights and standards of fairness are internally related to social relations and productive forces. His argument is also that only with new social relations and productive forces can there be new forms of distribution, involving new rights and standards of fairness. In this case, the principle of distributive justice of the higher phase of communism, distribution according to need, is internally related to the advanced mode of production and the conditions of abundance Marx expects of a fully developed communist society. In such a society, rights are possible that would seem unfair or absurd from the perspective of bourgeois conceptions of fairness, conditioned by a different mode of production and level of development. These rights may be as different to those in capitalism as those in capitalism are different from feudalism. Some commentators have extrapolated from this that standards of justice can only be appropriately applied to the mode of production within which they have arisen.[91] As noted above, this has been challenged by the argument that Marx regards capitalism as

creating the technological, organizational, and material possibilities for a cooperative mode of production and so regarding capitalism and the lower phase of communism as external to one another is mistaken.[92] That Marx regards the standards of fairness for a communist society in its lower phase as recognizably bourgeois in origin (in the sense of allocating goods in accordance with ability, not in the sense of the distribution of private property) not only confirms this, it confirms that inherent to the capitalist mode of production is the possibility for a more cooperative form of social organization and different forms of distributive justice. The point, then, is not to argue for any universal rights or notions of fairness, but to demand a "cooperative society based on common ownership of the means of production" and the rights and standards of fairness which form a part of this society.[93] I can find no evidence of Lukes' claim that Marx's post-capitalist society would dispense with rights altogether.

3. Conclusion

There is no reason, then, to read either "On the Jewish Question" or *Capital* as attacking the very idea of rights. Nor does describing Marx as criticizing bourgeois rights for being mere expressions of egoism do justice to his argument. "On the Jewish Question" contains a complex appraisal of the rights of bourgeois society based on what can be considered as *progressive* in relation to general human emancipation. Accordingly, he broadly criticizes rights that defend, in his view, forms of arbitrary power and he defends rights that secure social participation. *Capital* tries to show how the superficial appearance of free and fair exchange between rightful owners of commodities in the sphere of circulation masks the exploitation or the exchange of non-equivalents; coercion in the form of wage-dependency; and the alienation of rights incompatible with the capitalist mode of production. The "Critique of the Gotha Programme" raises profound questions over what standards of fairness and rights would be compatible with a cooperative mode of production. While a common thread is Marx's critique of the mystification of rights as universal or natural, I have no found no inconsistency between these views and defending rights *per se*.

In addition to demonstrating the problems with Lukes' reading of Marx, I have argued that a reassessment is due of the role of rights in Marx's thought and Marxism more generally. Marx's various critiques of bourgeois rights, not least in his magnum opus *Capital*, have helped give the view that he placed little value on rights. But his defence of citizens' rights in "On the Jewish Question" is based on how they secure an individual's participation in a community, which Marx argued was a prerequisite for creating a society governed by general and impartial laws and conventions rather than laws or decrees expressing arbitrary interests. I raised the question in section one about whether his defense of rights securing participation in political communities means he may have anticipated that the struggle to create a democratic society could or should involve a struggle for rights to participate in civil society and, if so, what those rights could be. Marx later in life continued to support rights of political participation, including universal suffrage. His defense of the Paris Commune shows that he valued democratic participation not only as giving power to the working-masses but, for example, as a way of ensuring that the branches of state act in the general interests of society rather than in the interests of class, bureaucracy, or heads of state.[94] What I find curious is that, while he supports and praises cooperative production, for having "shown that production on a large scale, and in accord with the behests of modern science, may be carried out without the existence of a class of masters employing a class of hands,"[95] there is little recognition in his writings that democratic participation in cooperative production should be a *right* in post-capitalist society, although it may be inferred from his description of such as a society as a "co-operative society based on common *ownership* of the means of production."[96] This

may be because of Marx's suspicion of the way that demands for rights tended to take the form of universalizing these rights in a way he not only found degrading (as discussed in section one) but also as "perverting . . . the realistic outlook, which it cost so much effort to instil into the Party but which now taken root in it, by means of ideological nonsense about right and other trash so common among the democrats and French socialists."[97]

But there is no need for Marxism or socialism to be as stringent as Marx in this respect. His main insight was that rights are internally related to historically specific social relations of production; productive forces; forms of social consciousness; and political and legal relations. Given this, a reassessment is due on what kind of rights and standards of fairness would be appropriate for a society with a more cooperative and democratic mode of production. Marx's writings prompt socialist movements to avoid framing their arguments in terms of bourgeois rights, which he tries to show are inextricably bound up with exploitation, and to avoid putting abstract utopian thinking in political programs. Instead, his writings suggest labor and socialist movements examine the development of productive forces, social relations, forms of social consciousness, and political and legal relations in capitalism; to look to the alternative forms of society these developments currently make possible; consider what kind of rights are consistent with these concrete possibilities; and center their demands for rights *on those*. Marx's writings suggest that these rights may take the form of securing an individual's capacity to participate in community or cooperative efforts. This discussion is beyond the present scope but made necessary by capitalism's continual revolutionizing of the productive forces of society. (Marx in the *Grundrisse* pinned hopes on automation creating the possibility for a reduction in labor-time and for new forms of distribution.)[98] Revisiting Marx's critique of liberal rights in *Capital*, then, should prompt a constructive discussion for socialists around rights.

Notes

1. An early draft of this paper was presented at Political Studies Association annual conference at Glasgow on April 11, 2017. My thanks to the helpful comments given there and to the feedback received from the anonymous reviewers.
2. Steven Lukes, "Can a Marxist Believe in Human Rights?," *Praxis International* 1 (1982) and *Marxism and Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).
3. Regarding the debate on the role of justice in Marx's thought, the argument that Marx did not condemn capitalism as unjust has become known as the "Tucker-Wood thesis." See Robert Tucker, *The Marxian Revolutionary Idea* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969); Allen Wood, "The Marxian Critique of Justice," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1, no. 3 (1972), reprinted in *Marx, Justice, and History*, ed. Marshall Cohen, Thomas Nagel, and Thomas Scanlon (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980); Allen Wood, "Marx on Right and Justice: A Reply to Husami," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 8, no. 3 (1979), reprinted in *Marx, Justice, and History*, ed. Cohen, Nagel, and Scanlon; and Allen Wood, *Karl Marx,* 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 2004). See also Derek Allen, "Is Marxism a Philosophy?," *Journal of Philosophy* 71 (1974); George Brenkert, "Freedom and Private Property in Marx" in *Marx, Justice, and History*, ed. Cohen, Nagel, and Scanlon; and Allen Buchanan, *Marx and Justice: The Radical Critique of Liberalism* (New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1982). For arguments that Marx did in fact criticize capitalism as unjust see Richard Arneson, "What's Wrong with Exploitation?," *Ethics* 91 (1981); Gerald Allan Cohen, "Review of Karl Marx by Allen W. Wood," *Mind* XCII, no. 367 (1983); Jon Elster, "Exploitation, Freedom, and Justice," in *Marxism*, ed. Roland Pennock and John Chapman (New York and London: New York University Press, 1983); Norman Geras, "The Controversy About Marx and Justice," *New Left Review* 150 (1985); Michael Green,

"Marx, Utility, and Right," *Political Theory* 11, no. 3 (1983); Roger Hancock, "Marx's Theory of Justice," *Social Theory and Practice* 1 (1971); Ziyad Husami, "Marx on Distributive Justice," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 8 (1978), reprinted in *Marx, Justice, and History*, ed. Cohen, Nagel, and Scanlon; and Sean Sayers, "Analytical Marxism and Morality," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 19 (1989). For useful surveys of the debate, see Geras, "The Controversy About Marx and Justice" and Lukes, *Marxism and Morality*.

Regarding the debate that Lukes' work initiated over the role of human rights in Marx's thought and Marxism, see Leslie Macfarlane "Marxist Theory and Human Rights," *Government and Opposition* 17 (1982); Leszek Kolakowski, "Marxism and Human Rights," *Daedalus* 112, no. 4 (1983); Drucilla Cornell, "Should a Marxist Believe in Rights?," *Praxis International* 45 (1984); William McBride, "Rights and the Marxian Tradition," *Praxis International* 57 (1984); David Baxter, "Marx, Lukes, and Human Rights," *Social Theory and Practice* 15, no. 3 (1989); Amy Bartholomew, "Should a Marxist Believe in Marx on Rights?," *The Socialist Register* 26 (1990); Christopher Boyd, "Can a Marxist Believe in Human Rights?," *Critique* 37 (2009); and Justine Lacroix, "Should a Marxist Believe in Human Rights?," in *Arguing about Justice: Essays for Philippe Van Parijs* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Presses Universitaires de Louvain, 2011). See also Jeremy Waldron, ed., *Nonsense upon Stilts: Bentham, Burke, and Marx on the Rights of Man* (London: Methuen, 1987), 126–31.

4. Lukes, *Marxism and Morality*, 28–9.
5. Ibid., 65.
6. Ibid., 68.
7. Ibid., xii–xii.
8. Ibid., xii–iii; 70.
9. Namely, Cornell, "Should a Marxist Believe in Rights?" and McBride, "Rights and the Marxian Tradition," respectively.
10. Bartholomew "Should a Marxist Believe in Marx on Rights?" and Boyd, "Can a Marxist Believe in Human Rights?"
11. David Leopold. *The Young Karl Marx: German Philosophy, Modern Politics, and Human Flourishing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 150.
12. Lukes, *Marxism and Morality*, 63.
13. David McLellan, *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought* (UK Papermac/MacMillan, 1995), 7–27; Julius Carlebach, *Karl Marx and the Radical Critique of Judaism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978); and Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx* for discussion of the context in which "On the Jewish Question" was written.
14. Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question," in *Karl Marx: Early Writings*, ed. Gregor Benton, Lucio Colletti, and Rodney Livingstone (UK: Penguin, 1992 [1975
15. Ibid.
16. Lukes, *Marxism and Morality*, 65. For the classic discussion of the meaning of rights see Wesley Hohfeld, "Section One" of *Fundamental Legal Conceptions as Applied to Judicial Reasoning*, ed. David Campbell and Phillip Thomas (London and New York: Routledge, 2016).
17. Lukes, *Marxism and Morality*, 67. See Ronald Dworkin, *Taking Rights Seriously* (London: Duckworth, 1977) regarding the theory of rights as having "trumping" power over other concerns.
18. Lukes, *Marxism and Morality*, 65.
19. Boyd, "Can a Marxist Believe in Human Rights?," 585.
20. Lukes, *Marxism and Morality*, 64–5.
21. Ibid., 63.
22. Marx, "On the Jewish Question," 228–9 (emphasis in original).
23. Ibid., 227–8.

24. Bartholomew, "Should a Marxist Believe in Marx on Rights?," 247–8.
25. Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx,* 151–55.
26. Marx, "On the Jewish Question," 231.
27. Karl Marx, "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Introduction" in *Karl Marx: Early Writings*, 253.
28. Karl Marx, "Debates on Freedom of the Press," in *Karl Marx–Frederick Engels, Collected Works*, Vol. 1, an English edition (Moscow, London, New York; Lawrence and Wishart, 1975), 162. See also, R. Hunt, *The Political Ideas of Marx and Engels,* Vol. I (UK: MacMillan, 1975), 37.
29. Lukes, *Marxism and Morality*, 61.
30. See McLellan, *The Young Hegelians* (UK: MacMillan, 1969); and Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx*, for further discussion.
31. Marx, K. "Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State" in *Karl Marx: Early Writings*, 87–8.
32. Marx, "On the Jewish Question," 221.
33. I have emphasized that this is Marx's view in "On the Jewish Question" because the first time Marx defends communism is in the manuscripts he wrote during the summer of 1844, often referred to as the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts. See endnote 57 for literature on the democratic republicanism of Marx's writings in 1842–4. That Marx is writing as a democratic republican in "On the Jewish Question" and as a communist in *Capital* and "The Critique of Gotha Programme" is one reason for not reading into these later writings this particular view of historical progress. The other is that the teleological view of history Marx sketches in the "Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of State" and "On the Jewish Question" is not based on the conceptual framework of the materialist conception of history that Marx uses in *Capital* and "The Critique of Gotha Programme." Without entering into either the long-standing debate over the continuity of Marx's thought or the discussion over whether Marx's materialist conception of history remains a teleological one, both of which are beyond the present scope, the very minimal point can be made that the teleological view of history developing towards the full and final realisation of a true democracy is idiosyncratic to the "Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of State" and "On the Jewish Question," and other texts written at this time.
34. Ibid., 232.
35. Karl Marx, "Letters From the Franco-German Yearbooks," in *Karl Marx: Early Writings*, 201.
36. Marx, "On the Jewish Question," 232–3.
37. Ibid., 219.
38. Ibid., 234.
39. Marx quoting Hegel in "Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State," 61.
40. Marx, "On the Jewish Question," 220
41. Ibid., 234.
42. Ibid., 230; Bartholomew, "Should a Marxist Believe in Marx on Rights?," 249 (emphasis added).
43. Marx, "Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of State," 148.
44. Marx, "On the Jewish Question," 241.
45. Marx, "Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State," 146–7.
46. Marx, "On the Jewish Question," 239.

47. Ibid., 220.
48. Ibid., 241.
49. Christopher Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600–1947* (London: Allen Lane, 2006), 445. The debate was also reignited by the "Damascus Affair"—see Carlebach, *Karl Marx and the Radical Critique of Judaism*, 69–75.
50. Marx quoted in McLellan, *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought*, 103.
51. See Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx*, 109–29; R. Boer, "Friends, Radical and Estranged: Bruno Bauer and Karl Marx," *Religion and Theology* 17 (2010): 374–7; and Carlebach, *Karl Marx and the Radical Critique of Judaism*, 125–47, for more detailed discussion.
52. Bruno Bauer, "The Jewish Problem" in *The Young Hegelians: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence Stepelevich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 195.
53. Marx's refutation of Bauer's other argument is that Jewish egoism comes not from theology but the historical confinement of Jews to the interstices of traditional civil society as petty traders and money lenders, excluded from other occupations. With the commercialization of civil society and the increased participation of Christians in these activities, these old distinctions no longer had meaning. His conclusion that an end to this egoistic form of civil society would be the abolition of Judaism (to mean egoistic, commercial activity here), as well as some of his other remarks, have been described vulgar and insulting at best and anti-Semitic at worst. See Carlebach, *Karl Marx and the Radical Critique of Judaism* for a critique of the text as an anti-Semitic document (352), as well Helmut Hirsch "The Ugly Marx: Analysis of An 'Outspoken Anti-Semite,'" *Philosophical Forum* 8 (1978): 2–4; and William Blanchard "Karl Marx and the Jewish Question," *Political Psychology* 5, no. 3 (September 1984). For challenges to this interpretation see David McLellan, *Marx Before Marxism* (UK, MacMillan, 1970) and McLellan, *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought*; Shlomo Avineri, "Marx and Jewish emancipation," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 25, no. 3 (1964), and *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968). See also David Fischman, "The Jewish Question About Marx," *Polity* 21, no. 4 (1989); Yoav Paled, "From Theology to Sociology: Bruno Bauer and Karl Marx on the Question of Jewish Emancipation," *History of Political Thought* 23, no. 3 (1992); and Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx,* for important contributions.
54. Marx, "On the Jewish Question," 227.
55. There is a great deal of literature on Marx's critique of ideology in the context of his critique of religion. See for example, David McLellan, *Marx and Religion* (London: MacMillan, 1987); Bertell Ollman, *Alienation,* 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 237–234; and Denys Turner, "Religion: Illusions and liberation" in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Marx*, ed. Terrell Carver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
56. Lukes, *Marxism and Morality*, 68–9.
57. Marx, "Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of State," 191.
58. Ibid., 112–3.
59. Ibid., 87. See Marx's critique of Hegel's monarchy, bureaucracy, and legislature in "Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of State," 127, 191.
60. Boyd, "Can a Marxist Believe in Human Rights?," 586.
61. For discussion of Marx's radical democratic republicanism in his early writings, see Shlomo Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx* (Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, 1968), 35-8.; Richard Hunt, *The Political Ideas of Marx and Engels,* Vol. I (London: MacMillan, 1975), 55, 66; Jeffrey Isaac, "The Lion's Skin of Politics: Marx on Republicanism," *Polity* 22, no. 3, 1990; Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx*; and Patricia Springborg, "Marx on Democracy, Participation, Voting, and Equality," *Political Theory* 12, no. 4 (1984).

62. See Marx, "Debates on Freedom of the Press," 162. For the right to vote, see Marx, "Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of State," 191.
63. Marx, "On the Jewish Question," 228.
64. See for example Joseph Femia, *Marxism and Democracy* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993).
65. Compare to how, in "The Civil War in France," written in 1871, Marx praises the Paris Commune as a democratic community confronting the supposedly non-political relations between capitalist and worker with its restraining the arbitrary power of the capitalist by "prohibition, under penalty, of the employers" practice to reduce wages by levying upon their workpeople fines under manifold pretexts—a process in which the employer combines in his own person the parts of legislator, judge, and executor, and filches the money to boot." Karl Marx, "The Civil War in France" in *Karl Marx–Frederick Engels, Collected Works*, Vol. 22, an English edition (Moscow, London, New York; Lawrence and Wishart, 1986), 334.
66. Marx first adopted the term communism to describe his political position in the spring of 1844 and the first text in which we find him providing a defense of communism is the manuscripts he wrote in the summer of that year, now known as the *Economic and Philosophical* Manuscripts. See McLellan, *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought*, 87.
67. Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, ed. Ben Fowkes and Ernest Mandel (UK: Penguin, 1990), 280.
68. For discussion of Marx's critique of morality as ideological, see Buchanan, *Marx and Justice*; Lukes, *Marxism and Morality*; George McCarthy, "Marx's Social Ethics and Critique of Traditional Morality," *Studies in Soviet Thought* 29, no. 3 (1985); Jeffrey Reiman, "Moral Philosophy: The Critique of Capitalism and the Problem of Ideology," in *Cambridge Companion to Karl Marx*; Sean Sayers, "Analytical Marxism and Morality"; and Wood, *Karl Marx*. The classic Soviet literature on this issue is Evgeny Pushukanis, *Law and Marxism: A General Theory*, trans. Barbara Einhorn (London: Ink Links, 1978).
69. Marx, *Capital*, 272–3.
70. Ibid., 875.
71. Ibid., 884–6; 891–2; 897–903; 915–7.
72. Ibid., 878–9.
73. Ibid., 883.
74. Ibid., 876.
75. See David Harvey, *A Companion to Marx's Capital* (London: Verso, 2010), 189–201, for a useful discussion.
76. Marx, *Capital*, 179.
77. One passage which has been the subject of much discussion is Marx's description of the fact that labor-power is a commodity that can produce more value than itself embodies as "a piece of good luck for the buyer, but by no means an injustice towards the seller." Marx, *Capital*, 301. For discussion see Geras, "The Controversy About Marx and Justice," 50; 55–6.
78. This undercuts apologist arguments that the exploitation in capitalism lies in individual exploitative practices—particular capitalists exploiting their workers by paying them for less than the value of their labor-power, for instance. This would not be an exchange of equivalents and unjust according to bourgeois standards of

justice. An apologist for capitalism can condemn these as individual acts of exploitation and moralistically demand that workers be paid for the full value of their labor-power, while decrying attempts to impose limits on working hours as an infringement on the *worker's* liberty to sell their commodity, labor-power, however they please, and insisting that a purer form of capitalism can realize fair exchange to everyone's benefit.

79. See Lukes, *Marxism and Morality*, 50; Geras, "The Controversy About Marx and Justice," 51; and Wood, "The Marxian Critique of Justice," 13.
80. Particular attention has been paid to this passage on surplus value: "There is not one single atom of its value that does not owe its existence to unpaid labor. The means of production, with which the additional labour-power is incorporated, as well as the necessaries with which the labourers are sustained, are nothing but component parts of the surplus-product, of the tribute annually exacted from the working class by the capitalist class. Though the latter with a portion of that tribute purchases the additional labour-power even at its full price, so that equivalent is exchanged for equivalent, yet the transaction is for all that only the old dodge of every conqueror who buys commodities from the conquered with the money he has robbed them of." Marx, *Capital*, 728. See Husami, "Marx on Distributive Justice," 68–9. For other instances of Marx's use of "theft" or "robbery" see *Capital*, 376; 875; and 929. Gerald Cohen: "since . . . Marx did not think that by capitalist criteria the capitalist steals, and since he did think he steals, he must have meant that he steals in some appropriately non-relativist sense. And since to steal is, in general, wrongly to take what rightly belongs to another, to steal is to commit an injustice, and a system which is 'based on theft' is based on injustice." Cohen, "Review of *Karl Marx*," 443.
81. See the discussion in Geras, "The Controversy About Marx and Justice," 56; and Husami, "Marx on Distributive Justice," 53.
82. Husami, "Marx on Distributive Justice," 47.
83. Sayers, "Analytical Marxism and Morality," 98.
84. Ibid., 101.
85. Marx, *Capital*, 171.
86. Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme," in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 615. There is a great deal of discussion about this passage as offering possible evidence that Marx regarded communism as a society beyond claims of justice. See Geras, 'The Controversy About Marx and Justice," 50–1; 53–4; and 60–1, for a survey of this discussion.
87. See Geras, "The Controversy About Marx and Justice," 50, 52, for a survey of this discussion. I interpret Marx's meaning here to be a criticism of the view that the standard of distributive justice can be independent of the mode of production, rather than being against standards of justice altogether.
88. Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme."
89. Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme," emphasis added.
90. Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme," 615, emphasis added. There is a great deal of discussion about this passage as offering possible evidence that Marx regarded communism as a society beyond claims of justice. See Geras, "The Controversy About Marx and Justice," 50–1; 53–4; and 60–1 for a survey of this discussion.
91. See for example, Buchanan, *Marx and Justice*, 53 and Wood, "The Marxian Critique of Justice," 13.
92. See Hohfeld, "Section One," *Fundamental Legal Conceptions as Applied to Judicial Reasoning;* especially pages 11 and 12.
93. Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme," 614.
94. Marx, "The Civil War in France," 330–4.

95. Karl Marx, "Inaugural Address to the First International" in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings,* 580.
96. I have emphasized Marx's use of ownership, which implies rights as a bundle of powers, privileges, immunities and claims, rather than physical *control.* As in Hohfeldian analysis in which complex rights are comprised of privileges, claims, powers, and immunities. See Hohfeld, "Section One," *Fundamental Legal Conceptions as Applied to Judicial Reasoning,* especially 11–12.
97. Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme," 614–5.
98. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, ed. Martin Nicolaus (UK: Penguin, 1973), 831.

Bio



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Martin Moorby is a Ph.D. candidate in the Politics department at the University of Exeter, UK. His doctoral thesis, *Unravelling the Riddle: Alien Politics in the Thought of Karl Marx,* examines political alienation as a conceptual space in Marx's writings.

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The Best of All Possible Ends of the World: An Interview with Andrew Culp

Josef Thorne

ABSTRACT *Dark Deleuze* (University of Minnesota Press, 2016) appears as an anomaly in English Deleuze scholarship. Andrew Culp contrasts Deleuze as a thinker of positivity who constantly demands we find "reasons to believe in this world" with a Deleuze of dark negativity. In doing so, Culp offers an alternative Deleuze in a time where powerful forces from Buzzfeed to the IDF seek to appropriate Deleuze's thought. The Dark Deleuze speaks of destructive negativity, hatred for this world, and the shame of being human. All of these ideas are pit against "the canon of joy" that would have us relentlessly celebrate the new, affirm the present, and give in to compulsory positivity. Culp makes a powerful case that, contrary to what one might expect, it is precisely the positivity that lies at the heart of both liberal and accelerationist readings of Deleuze.

Dark Deleuze (University of Minnesota Press, 2016) appears as an anomaly in English Deleuze scholarship. Andrew Culp contrasts Deleuze as a thinker of positivity who constantly demands we find "reasons to believe in this world" with a Deleuze of dark negativity. Such darkness has been suppressed not merely by readers of Deleuze but even by the philosopher himself. *Dark Deleuze* is relentless in its attempt to separate politics and ontology. In doing so, Culp offers an alternative Deleuze in a time where powerful forces from Buzzfeed to the IDF seek to appropriate Deleuze's thought. *Dark Deleuze* is true to the Deleuzian dialectic of fidelity and betrayal precisely in how it betrays the master. Culp does nothing less than attempt to think behind Deleuze by making him give birth to a monstrous child. The Dark Deleuze speaks of destructive negativity, hatred for this world, and the shame of being human. All of these ideas are pit against "the canon of joy" that would have us relentlessly celebrate the new, affirm the present, and give in to compulsory positivity. Culp makes a powerful case that, contrary to what one might expect, it is precisely the positivity that lies at the heart of both liberal and accelerationist readings of Deleuze.

Initial Questions

In* Dark Deleuze*, you suggest that after the death of God and the death of Man there is a third death, the death of This World. How does the death of this world affect political practice? How would revolutionaries espousing this idea act differently from those who currently exist?

Most people introduce the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari through the events of May '68 in France. The year 1968 is itself one of those important years of revolution… 1789, 1848, 1917. And as Antonio Negri has said in an interview, "in the nineteenth century France did politics and Germany did metaphysics, in the twentieth century France

did metaphysics and Italy did politics."[1] It is therefore easy to see why *Anti-Oedipus* is usually regarded as a book-of-that-moment.

The Dark Deleuze project takes a different year of revolution as its point of departure: 1989. Most only think of it as the year of the fall of the Berlin Wall, but 1988/1989 marked the first mass economic summit protests in Berlin and Paris. Just a couple years later, the first commercial Internet Service Providers came online. This period coincides with the political uptake of Deleuze and Guattari in North America. (Parenthetically, I should add that there were other versions before that, namely "schizo-culture" which is way too acid for my taste.) The D&G of anti-globalization emphasized the importance of the rhizome, as seen in its many names: "the movement of movements," "a global network," "a world where many worlds are possible." This is really when the notion of "think global, act local" solidified, and there were a number of global convergences that fused into "alter-globalization" that is also called "the global justice movement." These characterizations never completely sat right with me—the World Social Forum and other attempts to do "globalization from below" still seemed too tied to liberal democratic notions of global governance, populist socialist principles of people power, and a rather dull interpretation of communism.

My project is inspired by another current that flows through the anti-globalization period: left-communism and so-called nihilist anarchism. Moreover, it is an intellectual trajectory that takes a distance from its prehistory, which goes back at least to the 19th and early 20th century. There's already plenty of ink on those heretical communists, Max Stirner, and non-soviet political experiments. For me, there is clearly an epistemological break in the mid-20th century that coincides with the New Left, Situationism, Post-Structuralism, Autonomia, and other movements that step outside of the long shadow cast by organization and will. It is the radical thought/practice that emerges from this break that interests me the most. So a key reference point is Fredy Perelman and Red and Black Press, who promoted a unique intersection of Situationist, left-communist, and insurrectionary anarchist materials that make up a lesser-known current of American anarchism. Other references in that mix include *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*, Jacques Camatte, Gilles Dauvé, Tiqqun, and Claire Fontaine. Furthermore, while I enjoy speaking to others who know the older history of council communism, philosophical debates among the Young Hegelians, or other historical material, I think the last few decades have been innovative enough to keep us from paying our dues to old white movements that largely failed.

With that being said, what does this look like on the practical level?

Practice? A lot depends on the question of how to fight from where you stand. Broadly, I think Dark Deleuze turns away from both mass movement building and Leninist notions of politics. In other places I've spoken about "the shadow of Lenin," namely the primacy of organization in social change, the role of blueprinting models for a new society, and the need for vanguardist leadership to promote education/discipline. I am not trying to be unfair to the legacy of Lenin, who managed to do something far grander than us. Yet I think that radical politics is stuck in a fundamentally sociological mode. This is why so many anti-Leninists are still trapped in his shadow, such as anarcho-syndicalists who think that democratic process is the solution to our political ills. Maybe I am just rehashing the Foucault-Chomsky debate here! So as Baudrillard once suggested we "forget Foucault," my proposition is to "forget Lenin" and the sociological dimension of politics that his approach implies.

On a more personal level, I have also shifted to thinking of myself as a lifer. The consequences are pretty significant. I now embrace our insignificance in the grand scheme

of things, have jettisoned moralist/guilt-based politics, and now prefer to work with like-minded folks. Believing in your own insignificance seems integral for managing the libidinal economy of participation. The emotional politics of urgency-relief that drive most people to feel good simply for "doing something" like marching at a rally is the drug of choice for most community organizers. Early on, it can be easy to get hooked on the emotional rollercoaster. But if you stick around long enough, it is important to get wise. The same can be said about moralist politics. The added caveat being that call-out culture has the same basic dynamics of war communism, which makes it as equally unsustainable. The question of working with like-minded people is a thorny one. Briefly, I do not believe in mass movement building. Yet I also do not like lifeboat politics that only works for the benefit of me-and-mine. As you know, there is a body of literature on "the politics of friendship," including Derrida's critique of the friendship that philosophy inherits from the Greeks as patriarchal. I have personally tried to think through the problematic through a quote from Guattari, who when writing about his relationship to Deleuze, once said that "Gilles is my friend, not my buddy."

Specific practices always seem to ebb and flow. I still reflect on the 2008–2011 "insurrectionary" period in North America/Europe. The queer group Bash Back! was a high point, and their history was chronicled in a wonderful anthology titled Queer Ultraviolence. The Invisible Committee approach of starting land projects (which goes by the name "Tiqqunism" in North America) has been popular for the last five years. I have my reservations, but the strategic genius of it is undeniable: by inhabiting the material conditions closer to that of a peasant than a biopolitical citizen, one's self-subsistence makes large structures of power (such as the state) easier to desert. Very recently, the transformation of black bloc into antifa has been interesting. It does not form the same coherent strategy that the black bloc does, but it is at least amusing to see the far right echo chambers slap the antifa label on everything they dislike.

I've noticed in your work that you spend a great deal of time rallying against the intrusions of liberalism into Marxism and more specifically Deleuzianism. How can critiques of capitalism become liberal? Is it because of productivism? What exactly is it that separates the liberal from the non-liberal Deleuze?

Us Marxists often find ourselves quibbling most with friends who have fallen for the lure of liberalism. This risk is only intensified with Deleuzians, as many of them are self-professed liberals. The translator of *Difference and Repetition* and author of *Deleuze and the Political* is currently fusing together Deleuze and Rawls. William Connolly, one of the most prolific American political theorists, routinely uses Deleuze in support of his "radical liberalism" and in opposition to revolution. One of his former students, Nicholas Tampio just came out with a book premised on reading Deleuze against his Marxism in favor of "cutting-edge liberalism."

There's a reason this conflict of interpretation exists. Defined for so long as the thinker of difference, Deleuze appears to stand at the crossroads of Marxism and liberalism. Some thinkers even argue that Deleuze eliminates the forced choice between the two schools of thought. The image of this argument usually goes as such: the problem with capitalism is not that it is too liberal, but rather, not liberal enough. In form, it is a dialectical variation on the old stagist argument that communism comes into existence by following the historical transition of feudalism into capitalism into socialism into communism. The liberals agree that capitalism rides on the coattails of the bourgeois revolution. Yet they place a liberal version of social democracy at the end of the sequence. A curious conclusion given that the liberal concept of selfhood is premised on property ownership ("possessive individualism") that most Marxists intend to abolish along with the capitalism.

More abstractly, the "liberal Marxist" interpretation of Deleuze tracks back to the modernist aspiration for novelty, creativity, and the production of the new. Like Marx and Engels say in *The Communist Manifesto*, capitalism initiates unparalleled revolutionary change (tearing asunder sedimented social codes, melting everything solid into air) but unfortunately this revolutionary potential is geared exclusively toward privatizing its products in the hands of the few. Liberalism rears its head with how this state of affairs is critiqued. What is wrong with capitalism? If you think capitalism causes rootlessness, you are probably a neo-traditionalist. If you think capitalism divides us, you are most likely a brocialist. And if you think capitalism is wasteful, you could be a liberal Marxist. Just look at the Keynesian Marxism of Sweezy and Baran in *Monopoly Capitalism*, the Maoist focus on the "productive forces" evolving past capitalism's fetters, and other productivist accounts (sometimes including New Materialism, to the extent that it remains Marxist). Each are different logical conclusions of the modernist fixation on the production of the new. We can then summarize "liberal Marxists" as those who believe that capitalism is not creative enough.

Where does your work stand in relation to [Isabelle] Stenger's* Cosmopolitics *(2010)? You spoke positively of her and her project in one of your talks available on the internet, but you have spoken negatively of people like Latour in some of your interviews.

Stengers is a fellow traveler. She is an impeccable commentator and does really incisive intellectual history. Her position on capitalism is always critical; see, for instance, *Capitalist Sorcery* (2011, with Philippe Pignarre) or *In Catastrophic Times* (2015). So regardless of whatever objections I may have, any disagreement is a friendly one. But like most Deleuzians, she does not always shed the modernist prejudice for the new. *Cosmopolitics* is one strong instance of it. Her political commitment to the production of the new is unsurprising, as most of us first read her through her collaboration with Ilya Prigogine, *Order out of Chaos* (1994), which was an essential reference for those who built a politics out of the science of self-organizing systems. But as I have said elsewhere, politics arises in between metaphysics and normativity. We must avoid both pure metaphysicians who remain willfully ignorant to consequences and trend-chasers who confuse metaphysics *for* politics. A really succinct statement on the question was penned by Christian Thorne in "To the Political Ontologists," which really puts the screws to the recent ontologists, materialists, and realists.

Maurizio Lazzarato created a formulation that may evade the creativity-ontology issue that plagues many Deleuzians in "Capital-Labour/Capital-Life," the English translation of a chapter from his major work *Les révolutions du capitalisme* (2004). In it, he uses *Difference and Repetition* to argue that capitalism is a secondary action of capture that is a dull repetition of the same. It echoes one of the important insights of the Capture plateau in *A Thousand Plateaus*, namely that economic modes of production do not define all societies, rather, it takes the state to make production a mode. But maybe Lazzarato's formulation is not yet de-modernized enough?

My ultimate assessment of Stengers is that given her brilliant work on metaphysics, such as her work on Whitehead, her significant oeuvre exceeds any of the political limitations of liberal Marxism. An example: her work on Gaia was very important to developing my own thoughts on the Anthropocene.

In a similar vein to the above, how does your work relate to [Manuel] DeLanda's? The points where you discuss him were tantalizingly brief. It seems you have a negative opinion of him overall, but to what extent do you disagree with his reading? You claimed he often oversimplifies Deleuze's concepts, and his abandonment of Marxism is another point of contention. Are his books like* Nonlinear History *wrong or simply naive?

DeLanda is interesting. He is many people's gateway into Deleuze, and for that, the lucidity of his concrete examples are heartily appreciated. Yet his method is his problem. Deleuze moves from the abstract to the concrete, beginning with Virtual Ideas (also known as abstract machines) as what structures the real. This is philosophy as defined by him and Guattari in *What is Philosophy?,* the infinite speed of thought that is not caught up in slowness of any concrete state of affairs. DeLanda's method is the opposite; he always moves from the concrete to the abstract. In that sense, he is a crude materialist who actively denies the power of philosophy. The most significant consequence for me is that he empties out the space of politics.

In more philosophical terms, DeLanda is guilty of the same crime as most social theorists: by placing ontology before politics, he allows his own image of "what is" to foreclose the utopian dimension of politics that provokes radical transformation. Take for example his *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History* (1997). The book is a dangerously persuasive tracking of how small changes accrete over time. On a banal level, it feeds into the molecular story of politics loved by Deleuzian liberals: that the small victories of incrementalism are even more decisive than those who demand wholesale change. His work has even been used by the pesky "realists" who pour cold water on us by saying we need to learn more about how the system works before trying to change it, or that we are asking for too much, too fast. In a grander sense, what is lost is the whole role of the virtual and its relationship to the future as a force driven by the great unknown. So in Deleuzian terms, he only retrospectively acknowledges lines of flight because he only values them for their ability to be reterritorialized. He has even said as much in interviews: what he offers is "Deleuze for re-territorializers."

In a similar vein to question one, how does an escapist politics differ significantly from accelerationism, both of Land's type and Srincek's? Nick Land seems to proscribe dissolution and atomization of social and political entities, while you claim to advocate disruption. Land's ideal world is a Nozickian meta-utopia in a cyberpunk coat of paint, but what does the endgame of world-destruction look like, in practical terms, what does "blasting off with Sun Ra"—to paraphrase one of your other interviews—look like?

I abandoned an essay on Nick Land a few months ago, feeling that his ideas have gotten far more exposure than they deserve. This will probably be the last time I will mention him before no-platforming him. There are some useful kernels in Land's work during the Cybernetic Cultures Research Unit he headed up at Warwick in the 1990s; he has turned into something worse than a fascist. I would not discourage anyone from reading his monograph on Bataille, *Thirst for Annihilation (1990),* or any of the essays collected in *Fanged Noumena* (2011). Though I could not recommend either in good conscience without adding the caveat that they could be a roadmap to hyper-conservative thought.

If we step back from any one argument, Land is clearly a case study in paranoia-become-text. He tarries with many demons that do not really exist. And for the ones that do, he affords them far greater weight than they truly hold. His two favorite conspiracies are the academy and technology. Yes, he was drummed out of the university. But he was kicked out for acting like an antisocial fool, not intellectual blasphemy. If anything, the university unfortunately had *more* tolerance for his behavior than nearly any other type of workplace. Sure, universities have become more aggressive in enforcing their drug-free and sexual harassment policies. That hardly means that "The Cathedral" controls the globe through ideological programming. The great irony is how little influence academia really has on the world – my students are far more inculcated in popular culture than any discourse I introduce to them. Alternatively, let us consider his techno anti-humanism. Are computers cold, dead machines trying to kill humanity as we know it? Nah. And I am perplexed at him laying this notion at the feet of Deleuze and Guattari. For those

somehow not familiar with [Donna] Haraway's cyborg manifesto, it is clear that D&G don't believe in some outdated natural/synthetic dichotomy. In fact, one of the foundational claims of D&G's take on technology is that machines are social before they are technical.

In summary, the hermeneutic key to understanding all of Land is that he has the persecution complex of a narcissist. He wants nothing more than to be The Bad Guy. His willingness to switch political sides has nothing to do with embracing darkness in an extramoral sense. He will do anything to remain the center of attention. That is why he trucks in fringe theories. This makes him more a psychoanalytic subject pathologically fixated on transgressing The Law, not some dark saint of materialism.

My own thoughts on escape are a reconfiguration of "the line of flight." My dissertation, which I titled *Escape*, was an attempt to change how we think about line of flight. The concept has long been thought of as a literary/creative flight of fancy, transversal connections between social groups, or line of subjective becoming. I remain faithful to the concepts in the Capture plateau and the anthropology chapter of *Anti-Oedipus*. In both, the line of flight is the means through which one social form transforms into another. "Capture" is the means through which states control lines of flight. This latter point is so important to D&G that they argue that societies should not be categorized according to their mode of production but their mode of prevention (here we find an interesting coincidence with [Alain] Badiou's concept of the event as a prevent). The task of escape is then about finding the lines of force that force a social form into decomposition.

The "end of the world" is both philosophically important but also a cognitive map of popular conceptions about revolution. A hundred years ago, revolution was represented through anxieties over the death of god as explored through Modernism. Now we have apocalyptic tales. The interesting thing is that most of the stories take place after the apocalypse. What we can take from this is that the end of the world does not mean that everything ends, but rather, everything changes. Yet the disappointing thing about most apocalyptic fiction is about how little changes. So as Fredric Jameson has argued, in popular culture, it is easier to imagine an end of the world than the end of capitalism. The characters wander barren lands wrought by environmental catastrophe yet key tenets of capitalism remain, whether they be private property, wage-labor, the class-relation, or something else. Worst of all, most of them are thought experiments in what undergirds society, the necessities that cannot be jettison when we can no longer afford the wasteful luxuries of art, pacifism, anti-racism, women's lib, or other things that have defined the New Left. Part of the project of thinking the end of the world is using the contemporary raw material of thinking revolution, apocalyptic fictions, to write new apocalypses that are more to our liking. This is where Sun Ra's afro-futurism comes into play. Consider his film *The Space of the Place* (1974)—it would be easy to mistake Ra's cosmic perspective as offering a survey of space as a solution, yet the heart of the dramatic conflict is over how best to destroy the Earth. In this case, it is neither the journey nor the destination that matters in the end.

Philosophically, each of the three deaths I mention match each of Kant's three critiques. I haven't worked through this as much as Gregg Flaxman, who covers the in the conclusion ("Sci-Phi") to his excellent book *Gilles Deleuze and the Fabulation of Philosophy*.

Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams are fellow travelers, so I do not want to spend a lot of time criticizing them. But one thing is clear: they do not strike me as very Deleuzian. They are far more Latourian in how they map social systems and imagine the role of science in society. I bet there are things about Latour that can be saved, though I have been put off by his strong third-way centrism. It seems that the most radical he gets is United Nations initiatives. So Srnicek and Williams are certainly to the left of that. But they are not

terribly committed readers of Marx, leaving out conversations about the dialectical nature of the organic composition of labor or even more serious Marxist management literature at the intersection of technology and manufacturing, making their whole take on automation rather surface. Their prescriptions are futurology that read a lot like Richard Bellamy's *Looking Backward: 2000–1887*, a speculative novel that imagined full automation in the year 2000. I would think my greatest political disagreement with them is over something I have with nearly all democratic socialists: the state. On the question of the state, Deleuze and Guattari are quite unambiguous, it is an enemy of the highest degree.

Is there room for a positive program, or an application of the canon of joy after Dark Deleuze has had his way? Does positivity and creativeness have a place in Dark Deleuze at all? If so, what happens after we end the world?

That's the question. I come from an anti-organizational, anti-programmatic anarchist tradition, so not that! There are plenty of people who suggested to me, with a wink and a nudge, "it's really a mix of the Dark and the Joyous that you want in the end, right?" I would rather not give them the satisfaction. In *Dark Deleuze*, I mean it when I say that the dark and the joyous are contrasts, forks in the road, alternatives. I genuinely hope we replace the joyous with the dark. Positivity and creativity do not need to be denounced, but I think they should no longer serve as motivating ideas.

After the end of the world? Well, for me: the end of capitalism is tied to the coming of communism. By that, I mean the abolition [of] private property, work, and all of the intolerable forms of oppression it enables (patriarchy, racism, ableism).

Conversations

It is definitely true that creativity and positivity for themselves have to be tossed out. Whitehead's creativity suffers a similar fate as Deleuze and Guattari's autoproduction. There are many who take novelty and treat it as if it is a good thing in itself, but the advance into novelty is just a state of affairs we can't do away with, not something good or bad.

Many people express this issue through the phrase "confusing ontology for politics." This is especially an issue for Deleuze, as his use of Spinoza often blurs the line between an account of what is and a judgment on what is good. There is a rather flat-footed reading of Deleuze's Spinozism whereby any collection of things that come together into an assemblage is a joyous encounter of bodies—everything else is just sad passions. There is even a funny way of reading the Geology of Morals plateau this way. So absurd! Those who read it this way just need to continue a few plateaus later to find Deleuze and Guattari railing against molar segmentarities and megamachines, arguing that large collections are fascist. I lay some of the blame at the feet of the "post-critical" turn in which some theorists have suggested that critique has failed and all we have left is constructivism. Latour is at the forefront of this. Perhaps this is why Deleuze and Guattari have to follow up *A Thousand Plateaus* with *What is Philosophy?* which promotes a definition of philosophy that exceeds a state of affairs. Though we were already told about this at the end of the Rhizome plateau, when they declare an end to ontology.

I suppose what I was getting at is that after the world has ended, at that point wouldn't that be when positivity comes in as something non-compulsory? Once we do away with our oppression with radical negativity aren't we allowed to breathe some fresh air and listen to Zarathustra? Or is constant negativity necessary to stave off the dreaded Buzzfeed Deleuze?

The key to my understanding of positivity is this: Deleuze has a positive metaphysics but it need not imply a positive politics. For Deleuze, there is no anti-matter, only the positive exists, e.g. when making art, no matter if you are James Terrell making light art or Jun'ichirō Tanizaki in *In Praise of Shadows*, you have to make something rather than nothing. Problems arise when people take positivity as a political principle. That's how we get the self-help Nietzsche, the Lego Spinoza, the Buzzfeed Deleuze. I find negativity through the intolerable: those things that disarm us of all our ability to overcome them, where the only faculty we have left is our capacity to think. Philosophy is the re-posing of problems in a different way so that a new set of solutions appear.

"The world" is philosophically the result of Kant's third critique. He thinks that knowledge arrives from "the world." I say that this is our current horizon of thought – all of that worldly thinking has us in a state of exhaustion. Climate change being the most dramatic example. In the philosophical sense, then we move from knowledge coming from god, man, or the world to something else. I certainly don't want to suggestion that we should all live in a constant state of ennui. But yes, the role of thought is to change our whole orientation, and I think that it should continue without end.

Notes

1. Cesare Casarino and Antonio Negri, "It's A Powerful Life: A Conversation on Contemporary Philosophy," *Cultural Critique* 57 (2004): 154.

Bio

Josef Thorne

Josef Thorne is an autodidact primarily interested in A.N Whitehead, Deleuze, and Sloterdijk.

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Doing What You Love in the Age of Mass Debt

Elizabeth Verklan

ABSTRACT This paper examines the relationship between student debt and the changing terrain of work in U.S. culture, while attending to how these shifts mark a specifically gendered, radicalized phenomenon. Drawing on the AAUW's 2017 report on student debt, this paper examines the figure of the fashion intern in order to think about how the gender and racial inequities in student debt collude with what Angela McRobbie terms 'the feminization of work' to effect a gendered, radicalized form of indebtedness. I assert that the 'do what you love' ethos described by Miya Tokumitsu contributes to the proliferation of feminized work in the culture industries, such as fashion, and the perpetuation of racial exclusivity within the industry.

In 2017, education debt in the U.S. reached $1.4 trillion dollars.[1] While this exorbitant sum is shared among 44 million borrowers, it is not shared equally. Examining data from a 2016 study produced by the U.S. Department of Education, the American Association of University Women (hereafter, AAUW) report that while 2007–08 male college graduates were able to secure full-time employment to pay off their student loans, their female counterparts were not.[2] The report states: "Between 2009 and 2012, men who graduated in the 2007–08 school year paid off an average of 44% of their student debt, while women in that group managed to pay off only 33% of their student debt."[3] This discrepancy is troubling given that more women, 53%, compared with 39% of their male counterparts, are putting more of their salaries towards student debt repayment, which means that these women are "less able to save for retirement, buy a car, or invest in a home."[4] The AAUW attributes this discrepancy to the gender pay gap, and emphasizes that the inability to pay back student debt is worst for Latinas (who had paid back 3 percent at the time of the study) and African-American women (9 percent), while white women (37 percent) and Asian-American women (61 percent) were considerably higher, albeit still trailing their male counterparts.[5]

As Maurizio Lazzarato and Andrew Ross argue, debt has become a significant social force, shaping the terms with which individuals understand themselves and society.[6] At the same time, Lazzarato, Ross, and Michael Hardt assert that waged work has become increasingly precarious and immaterial in nature.[7] Building on this scholarship, this paper examines the relationship between student debt and the changing terrain of work in U.S. culture, while attending to how these shifts mark a specifically gendered, racialized phenomenon. While Lazzarato, Ross, and Hardt provide compelling arguments regarding the nature of work and debt in contemporary capitalism, they do not address how the proliferation of immaterial labor marks what Angela McRobbie describes as the "feminization" of the labor force. As McRobbie observes, increasing precarity and

immateriality dovetail with the "feminization of work . . . the expansion of possibilities for women's employment across many countries and particularly in the affluent countries where there had been a strong feminist movement in the 1960s."[8] As McRobbie argues, "The nature of work in a post-Fordist economy favored the large skill pool and the flexibility of the female workforce," leading to a growth in female workers within the creative industries marked by precarity and immateriality, such as fashion.[9] In this way, both the demographics of the labor force as well as the labor itself became feminized, because the very work becoming "increasingly precarious, and under compensated" was, and is, explicitly "reliant on 'soft' skills such as communication, affect and cognition."[10] In other words, the feminization of work also entails the proliferation of those skills presumed "natural" to female persons (e.g., service, nurturance, and communication), but also long associated with the pink collar professions.[11] However, this is not to assert a gender essentialism, but rather to acknowledge how modes of laboring historically associated with women (e.g., emotional, service-oriented, boundary-less, and unwaged) now characterize the labor of many immaterial workers. As Christina Morini argues, "in cognitive capitalism precariousness, mobility, and fragmentation become constituent elements of the work of all persons irrespective of gender. The model advanced is pliable, hyper-flexible, and in this sense, it draws on the baggage of female experience."[12] Thus, to discuss the feminization of work is to acknowledge that in the post-Fordist era, not only are women participating in fields like the culture industries at an unprecedented rate, but the immaterial labor they undertake is feminizing in that it re-enforces a gender structure wherein woman-identified persons are disadvantaged via precarious employment. The significance of gender to understanding immateriality and student debt is especially worthy of consideration then because woman-identified persons are further in debt, are less likely to secure the kind of employment after graduation to pay it back, and (as I discuss below) are over-represented in those labor forms that remain very low-waged, if waged at all.[13]

At the same time, race also occupies a central role in understanding the gendered machinations of student indebtedness. As the figures regarding student indebtedness above highlight, debt repayment is most difficult for Latinas and African-American women, while it remains less so for white and Asian-American women. Thus, to speak of gendered indebtedness is to speak of racialized, gendered indebtedness, as the persons most impacted by student debt are women of color. This aspect of student indebtedness is not unrelated to the feminization of work. As Minh-Ha Pham outlines in her discussion of the invisible labors of Asian fashion superbloggers, "the racialization of women's work has also *benefitted* white women" (emphasis added).[14] As Evelyn Nakano Glenn argues, the nineteenth-century "cult of domesticity" that structured gender relations depended on the invisible domestic labors of women (and men) of color, effectively establishing a racial stratification within the realm of women's work.[15] Thus, while the feminization of work "draws on the baggage of female experience," it necessarily draws on the historical realities of women's work that have produced racial stratifications among women, of which white women have benefitted. The historical legacies of these stratifications continue in numerous forms of gendered, racialized labors that effectively reproduce a racial hierarchy wherein economically privileged, white women consume and benefit from the labors of women of color.[16] I examine the figure of the fashion intern because she illustrates how such racial stratifications among women are reproduced and intensified via student indebtedness. Additionally, as I outline below, the fashion intern is a particularly apt example because she highlights how racial stratifications within culture industries such as fashion are perpetuated.

Examining this phenomenon, I ask how the ideological imperative to 'do what you love' contributes to the gendered workings of indebtedness. "Do what you love, and love what

you do" is often presented as a form of spiritual guidance. For instance, in one of the more famous pronouncements of the "do what you love" ethos, in his 2005 Stanford graduation address, the late Steve Jobs advised graduating students "to find what you love" because, "the only way to do great work is to love what you do."[17] As a life ethos, "do what you love" suggests that exploitation is something that one can opt out of, because if one loves their work, then not only are they not exploited, but they are not working. In a 2014 *Jacobin* magazine article shared over 65,000 times on social media (and published as a book in 2015), author Miya Tokumitsu argues that the discourse of "do what you love" bears considerable advantages to capitalism, while hurting workers everywhere. As Tokumitsu asserts, "According to this way of thinking, labor is not something one does for compensation, but an act of self-love."[18] In this analysis, doing what one loves ensures spiritual fulfillment, albeit with adequate benefits and compensation perceived as incidentals, rather than necessities for survival.

Taken in the context of mass student debt, I pursue the following questions: What kinds of work are made possible, or impossible through the imperative to "do what one loves"? How does the imperative to "do what you love" intensify inequity along economic, racial, and gendered lines, especially within the context of mass debt? And, more specifically, how might the directive to "love" one's work, to warrant work null through "love," mark a particularly gendered manifestation of indebtedness? Pursuing these questions, I examine the figure of the fashion intern, whose gendered, culturally unrecognizable labor is a part of the broader proliferation of precarious labor forms marked by "instability, the absence of legal contracts (of employment abiding by legal standards) lack of protection and social benefits, lack of collective agreement of employment, and low wages" that permeate and characterize most of the culture industries in the current moment.[19] The fashion intern is one of the most iconic yet culturally unrecognizable fashion workers, and I assert that this misrecognition is because the fashion intern "loves" what she does, and thus does not work. I examine the fashion intern in order to think about how the gender and racial inequities evident in student debt collude with the feminization of cultural work, effecting a gendered, racialized form of indebtedness.

Examining the figure of the fashion intern then is an attempt to illustrate two important aspects crucial to understanding the structure of student debt and immaterial labor in the current moment. The first concerns the way in which immaterial labor, particularly that within the culture industries like fashion, is increasingly gendered feminine. This gendering occurs through the feminization of work that entails an increase in woman-identified persons undertaking these labors, but also the way in which this labor is characterized by its flexibility, adaptability, emotion work, and lack of a wage. The figure of the fashion intern is exemplary in this regard, as her labor, despite being crucial to the operations of fashion, remains culturally unrecognizable and unwaged. The second aspect concerns how the combination of mass student indebtedness and unpaid internships effectively prohibits women of color specifically, and indebted students generally, from entering fields within the culture industries such as fashion. As a 2012 study undertaken by *The Chronicle of Higher Ed* illustrates, internships remain the primary route with which recent graduates and/or new workers gain entry to their desired professions.[20] Internships throughout the culture industries, however, tend to be unpaid, demanding work that is economically prohibitive for any person carrying a significant debt load. Examining the figure of the fashion intern demonstrates how labor that—for all intents and purposes—exploits its workers and is compelled for free, nonetheless simultaneously acts as a means by which to bar the most economically vulnerable and historically underrepresented groups in these very industries. Thus, while the figure of the fashion intern highlights the feminization of immaterial work, she also exemplifies the ways in which "the categories of free labor and the various forms of subjugated labor—including

slave labor, indentured labor, and sweated labor—are economic expressions of racial and gendered logics."[21] Examining the figure of the fashion intern, then, is a means with which to articulate both the racial and gendered logics that underpin her exploitation but also the ways in which the racial inequities that permeate the fashion industry are perpetuated.

The paper is divided into four sections. In the first section, "The Politics of Student Debt," I return to the AAUW's report on student debt in order to represent how student debt disproportionately impacts women, and women of color specifically. I then situate this research alongside scholarship on debt to clarify how the AAUW's research confirms many of the theories present in the literature. In the next section, "Immaterial Labor and Doing What You Love," I trace how the shift to a precarious, knowledge economy entails a reorientation to work, and argue that the ethos of "do what you love" fulfills this reorientation. As I argue below,"do what you love" provides the ideological underpinnings necessary to prolonged precarious employment, and justifies the social exclusions for which industries such as fashion are infamously known. Discussing student debt and immaterial labor together I aim to show how an ethos of "do what you love" is both necessary to sustaining a precarious, immaterial economy undergirded by debt, but also, bears a distinctly gendered aspect. In the next section, "Fashion Interns," I examine the figure of the fashion intern, whose iconicity in U.S. media overshadows her unwaged, immaterial labor. In this section I outline how the unwaged labor of interns constitutes a large swath of necessary labor throughout the culture industries, and is compelled through the ideology of "do what you love." After my discussion of intern labor, I conclude with some final remarks concerning student debt, immaterial labor and "doing what you love," within the context of the fashion industry.

The Politics of Student Debt

As the AAUW reports, women possess "nearly two-thirds of the outstanding student debt in the US."[22] On the surface, this imbalance along gender lines reflects the changes in student population in higher education over the last sixty years. Women now earn more than half (57 percent) of bachelor's degrees in the U.S., and between 1976 and 2014 the total number of undergraduate students identifying as not-white "more than doubled from 16 percent to 42 percent."[23] However, these shifts in student population cannot account for the reality of student debt inequity. While the median household income has stagnated since 1976, the "median cost of college attendance has more than doubled since then."[24] This soaring cost of college attendance has unequally impacted women; women take on an average of 44 percent of debt for undergraduate education, compared to 39 percent for men.[25] As the AAUW notes, this discrepancy between debt load is exacerbated by the gender pay gap, because: "Women working full time with college degrees make 26 percent less than their male counterparts," which means less money to put towards repayment of student loans.[26]

For women of color, the rising cost of college attendance and gender pay gap is most severe. As noted in the AAUW report, wealth in the US is distributed along racial lines, as white and Asian families tend to have much higher incomes and accrued familial wealth than black or Latino families.[27] These discrepancies in total accrued wealth means that black and Latino students have less economic support from family members, and are more likely to cover the total costs of their education as individuals. These differences are reflected in the AAUW's research: "[T]he typical black woman who graduated with a bachelor's degree in 2011–12 did so with about $29,000 in student loans while black men averaged $25,000 . . . Asian graduates had the lowest debt, averaging about $11,000 in debt at graduation."[28] While black students—regardless of gender—share the bulk of

student debt, it is black women who comprise the most indebted on average.[29] As the AAUW states, "Women—especially women of color—are most likely to experience difficulties, 34 percent of all women and 57 percent of black women who were repaying student loans report[ed] that they had been unable to meet essential expenses within the last year."[30]

While the gains in diversity in higher education are positive outcomes of the legislative policies and political movements of the previous century, in order to be truly transformative, they must entail actual gains post-graduation. The inability to meet basic needs *because* one has obtained an advanced degree does not reflect an actual step towards equity in higher education; particularly because it is the very students held up as proof of change (i.e., students of color, women, first-generation students, women of color) who are struggling in this endeavor. Many of these students are also nontraditional students: parents of dependent children (including single parents), students financially independent of their parents, veterans, students re-entering college after significant time away (and thus often older), part-time students, and students working full-time while enrolled are increasingly entering post-secondary institutions.[31] Many of these nontraditional students are "disproportionately women, people of color, and first-generation college students."[32] Additionally, many of these students face hurdles to completing their college education that traditional students do not: balancing work and class schedules, finding affordable, dependent childcare, and facing interpersonal and psychological difficulties succeeding in an atmosphere catering to a much younger, childless, non-working student population. For single parents in particular (now more than 26 percent of all degree-seeking post-secondary students in the US), completing a college degree will pose the most difficulty. As the AAUW states: "Most student parents—69 percent—are low income, defined as at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level," many of whom are also single parents (54 percent), and women (71 percent).[33] Students with dependent children are more likely to take on larger amounts of debt, and take a longer amount of time to finish their degree programs (which also tends to entail a higher debt load).[34] However, completing a degree program, regardless of debt load, is far better than leaving without a degree. As the AAUW report outlines, students who leave college before completing are more likely to default on their student loans, and it tends to be nontraditional students who leave college before completing their programs.[35]

There is much to be gleaned from the AAUW's research on student debt, but perhaps the most significant to the present study is the way in which student debt works towards reinforcing existing social hierarchies through the very promise of transforming them. In this regard, the AAUW report affirms much of the theoretical insights garnered from recent literature concerning indebtedness. In his 2012 text, *The Making of the Indebted Man*, Lazzarato argues that the debtor-creditor relationship "intensifies mechanisms of exploitation and domination at every level of society," via a slow yet consistent tax on one's future wages and possibilities.[36] As the AAUW report highlights, student debt works towards a calcification of the very structural and social inequities higher education is often touted as transcending, such as socioeconomic class. Taken as an intensifier of exploitation and inequity, student debt succeeds in this endeavor, as the students entering college with the least social and economic capital stand to leave with the most debt, and demonstrate the most difficulty repaying it. For example, this function of student debt is quite evident when considering the profitability of loan defaults, the most lucrative opportunities for creditors.[37] As noted above, nontraditional students are not only most likely to leave college before obtaining a degree, but as such, they are also the most likely to default.[38] In this way, the very students already facing barriers to degree completion (such as childcare, ageism, work-school balance, etc.) become the most profitable to the student-debt system through their failure. Thus, rather than enabling more students to

obtain a degree once previously prohibitive, student debt has expanded the opportunities for exploitation and domination already in place.

In addition to the intensification of material inequities, the debt economy entails a re-figuration of subjectivity itself. As Lazzarato outlines, the predominance of the debtor-creditor relation in capitalist society comprises a material (i.e., economic indebtedness and thus a diminishment of one's overall wages) as well as a subjective component.[39] As Lazzarato states, "It is debt and the creditor-debtor relationship that make up the subjective paradigm of modern-day capitalism, in which 'labor' is coupled with 'work on the self', in which economic activity and the ethico-political activity of producing the subject go hand in hand."[40] It is this "work on the self" that is so significant to understanding student debt; accepted as a necessary burden in order to obtain economic and social capital, student debt differs from other kinds of debt in that it is most often framed as a means to a better life. Taking on student debt means that one is taking steps towards a better future, even if that future is compromised by rising debt load. As Ross argues, while the subjective component of student debt includes individuated kinds of violence, such as depression, suicide, and divorce, it simultaneously guides the means of protest, as publicly revealing and "owning" one's debt did during the Occupy protests of 2011.[41] This personalized aspect of debt is quite evident in the AAUW study, as a significant portion of women—especially black women—reported "very high levels of stress about repayment."[42] In sum, the subjective power of debt remains, and when taken in the context of a shifting terrain of work, bears relevance to understanding why an ethos of "do what you love" contributes to gendered indebtedness. Namely, taken in the context of mass debt and precarious employment, as a spiritual and professional ethos, "do what you love" suggests that work—with or without a wage—is simply enough. As Lazzarato argues, as both an economically material and subjectifying experience, debt reconfigures the ways in which individuals perceive waged labor. Because debt represents a deprivation on future time and money, the substance and meaning in waged work shifts, particularly for those kinds of employment necessarily entailing debt.[43] Speaking to this, Lazzarato states, "The dedication, the subjective motivation, and *the work on the self* preached by management since the 1980s have become an injunction to *take upon oneself* the costs of economic and financial disaster."[44] Lazzarato's comments are significant because they point towards the ways in which the injunction to take on debt intersects with ideological imperatives to better oneself, and live one's best life, regardless of actual material improvements to one's overall well-being. In the next section I suggest that the ethos of "do what you love" provides the "injunction to take upon oneself the costs of economic and financial disaster" by sustaining prolonged precarious employment.

Immaterial Labor and Doing What You Love

The concept of immaterial labor undergirds much of the recent scholarship concerning precarious labor, drawing significantly on the work of autonomous Marxism, specifically Maurizio Lazzarato (2006), Paolo Virno and Michael Hardy (2006), Michael Hardt (1999), and Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt's trilogy, *Empire* (2000), *The Multitude* (2005), and *The Commonwealth* (2009). Together, these texts build on earlier work within autonomous Marxism, specifically the work of Mario Tronti (1973), whose concept of the social factory undergirds the contemporary theorization of immaterial labor.[45] In his 2006 article, Lazzarato defines immaterial labor as emergent within "a great transformation" starting in the 1970s, wherein the workforce is "mass intellectualized," inaugurating a critical shift in the nature of work, and thus the power dynamics of capital accumulation. This transformation marks a shift in labor within the Western world. The advancement of technology to the production process, the mobility of capital, and the aftermath of worker revolts of the 1960s and 1970s worked to transform the labor

process so that the worker is expected to become an "active subject." As Lazzarato argues, the transformation of labor marks a stage in capitalist production wherein "a collective learning process becomes the heart of productivity, because it is no longer a matter of finding different ways of composing or organizing already existing job functions, but of looking for new ones."[46] In this way, aspects of life previously considered separate or distinguishable from the working day are now subsumed under it.

There is a two-part reasoning to the cause of this transformation within the autonomous school of thought. The first concerns a broader argument within the autonomous Marxist tradition that draws on Marx's *Grundrisse,* specifically the idea of "the fragment on machines" that describes the autonomy afforded the worker's intellect when labor is automated via technological advancement. The automation of labor processes means that labor previously requiring human, manual labor is now accomplished through technological automation, thus reducing significantly socially necessary labor time (if not eradicating it entirely). This transformation in production means that new modes of production, and thus new kinds of labor, are emergent, one form being immaterial labor. As Lazzarato asserts, "The old dichotomy between 'mental and manual labor,' or between 'material and immaterial labor,' risks failing to grasp the new nature of productive activity, which takes this transformation on board and transforms it," because as he goes on to argue, "it is around immateriality that the quality and quantity of labor are organized."[47]

The second reason behind this transformation in work and production concerns what the autonomists refer to as "the refusal of work," that refers to the 1960s labor protests within and beyond Italy, and the subsequent reorganization of work intended to circumvent the daily resistances and refusals to work on the part of all workers. The social unrest of the 1960s provided the terms with which a redefinition or restructuring of work became necessary so as to manage an unruly if not jaded populace of workers. This reconfiguration pivoted on the notion that work could become meaningful rather than monotonous and meaningless; it could in a sense become something more than, or perhaps entirely unlike, work. As Ross observes, from the 1970s onwards "a long series of management innovations designed to stimulate a jaded workforce" were enacted, such as "quality of work life programs" that intended "to inject some participation into decision-making and deliver more personal fulfillment to employees."[48] These kinds of participatory initiatives, coupled with an increasing autonomy afforded to workers (made possible through both technological advancement and the restructuring of work) instilled a sense that work could be meaningful and feel good, despite the fact that these same changes marked "the onset of a long decline in job security."[49] These causal shifts are evident in the precarious nature of immaterial labors.

Ross's observations concerning the onset of meaningful work on the one hand, and an increasingly precarious job market on the other, are crucial to understanding the nature of immaterial labor. Immaterial labor constitutes the knowledge, social relations, and communication crucial to a large swath of commodities and services; it is as Ross observes, the "culture work" of capitalism.[50] This labor encompasses two aspects, "the 'informational content' of the commodity" that refers to the actual changes in the work process (i.e., the skills utilized are "increasingly skills involving cybernetics and computer control"), and the labor that produces the "cultural content of the commodity," what Lazzarato describes as "a series of activities that are not normally recognized as 'work.'"[51] These activities include "defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and . . . public opinion"—the very cultural and creative work the interns of the culture industries aspire, and most often, perform for free.[52] This intangibility not only makes the work highly mobile, but also it can most often occur anytime and anywhere; indeed, there is a borderlessness inherent to it, because "an idea

or image comes to you not only in the office but also in the shower or in your dreams."[53] Ideas and creativity travel with the mind, and as such extend the working day in ways that are not always anticipatory or ideal. The boundaries of the working day and work itself are reconfigured rendering work omnipresent. This mobility to work is also a part of the autonomy afforded workers that marks production in post-Fordist capitalism, because work is no longer bound to a specific location. In this sense, subjectivity itself is reconfigured, because immaterial labor is intellectual labor, but also because as intellectual labor it can infiltrate dimensions of life previously or otherwise non-work-related. As Jason Read asserts, "For a new mode of production such as capital to be instituted it is not sufficient for it to simply form a new economy, or write new laws, it must institute itself in the quotidian dimensions of existence—it must become habit."[54] In other words, the advent of immaterial labor also necessitates a shift in how subject's orient themselves to work.

This subject-making power is no more present than in the ideology of "do what you love" that permeates the very cultural industries marked by precarity in the present moment. This sentiment was captured in a *New York Times* article on unpaid internships and the millennial generation, which quotes Breanne Thomas, a young person working several internships: "Success doesn't always mean financial success, but doing something you're passionate about . . . For some people, being an accountant, taking a safe route, is perfectly fine, but it's not where my values lie."[55] While the mantra itself does not appear in the quote, "do what you love" is the guiding logic behind it. Passion and values precede wages and healthcare for this individual in a route that is decidedly "unsafe." Indeed, in this quote, passion for one's work and a commitment to pursue work that embodies, if not reflects, one's values is exchanged for waged work. In this way, "do what you love, and love what you do," rather than doing what one needs to do to secure adequate wages and healthcare, justifies the precarity that exploits workers in these fields. Discussing the exchange of meaningful work and increasing precarity, Ross asserts, "In return for giving up the tedium of stable employment, there is the thrill of proving yourself by finding out if you have what it takes. Neoliberalism has succeeded wherever its advocates have preached the existential charge of this kind of work ethic, and of the virtues of being liberated from the fetters of company rules, managerial surveillance and formal regularity."[56] In this way, "do what you love" provides spiritual fulfillment and existential affirmation of the nonmonetary value of one's work *because* one does not do it for wages, or a large salary. This exchange of wages for passion bears implications for all workers because, as Tokumitsu argues, "when *passion* becomes the socially accepted motivation for working, talk of wages or reasonable scheduling becomes crass."[57] Thus, as an ethos, "do what you love" justifies the very kinds of work arrangements that characterize precarity, such as unwaged or low-waged work and flexibility, in its promise of personal fulfillment.

As Tokumitsu argues, the notion that one can or should merely "do what they love" is perhaps the most insidious and successful of neoliberal mantras because, while affirming some individual's choices to "do what you love," it simultaneously justifies the exploitation of all workers.[58] While some workers' choices reflect some kind of higher calling, this mantra makes other workers performing undesirable labor for equally, if not worse conditions of exploitation responsible for their very exploitation, because they could always leave to "do what they love." This individualistic ideology is both comforting and placating given the precarity of fields within which it is most touted. As Ross asserts, "The market evangelism of neoliberalism has produced so many converts because it exploits the credo that individuals have some control over their economic destinies."[59] Under this logic, personal choices rather than capitalist exploitation are to blame for one's lack of a living wage and health benefits, or even resentment at the drudgery of work itself,

because one could always choose to pursue what they love rather than what they need. Further, this ideology makes the absence of those very life necessities, such as a living wage and health benefits irrelevant, because the ideological presupposition to do what one loves not only makes the work itself the prize (i.e., one gets to do the work, which is the reward because one "loves" it), but also broader demands on behalf of labor become shortsighted. Indeed, "loving your work" reduces the possibility for "new forms of labor organization[,] and even justifies wage stagnation and regression" by compelling labor from individuals for very little, if anything at all.[60] In effect, this emphasis on personal choice operates as what McRobbie describes as a form of self-management: "There is an expectation of pleasure in the work itself, such that it functions as rationale for embarking on an otherwise perilous career . . . What starts as an inner desire for rewarding work is retranslated into a set of techniques for conducting oneself in the uncertain world of creative labor."[61] In sum, "doing what one loves" provides the mode of governance necessary for precarious capitalism.

Of course, "doing what one loves" rather than what one has to, is only possible for those who can afford to do so. As Tokumitsu observes: "Maybe anyone can do what he or she loves, but only the wealthy can avoid going into debt for it."[62] Indeed, given the reality of mass student debt, it seems unlikely that anyone other than those without student debt could pursue the kind of immaterial, unwaged work so often associated with the "do what you love" ethos. The imperative to do what you love amidst the creative economy is especially concerning given that wages for workers between the ages of 25 and 34 with bachelor's degrees has fallen, while student debt loads have consistently grown. Taken in this context, "do what you love" is an ethos that belies socioeconomic status, rather than passion for one's work.[63] Discussing the precarity of creative work, McRobbie astutely observes that "to some extent middle-class status nowadays rests upon the idea that work is something to which one has a passionate attachment" rather than middle-class wages itself.[64] One can however only pursue this path if some middle-class comforts are already secured, such as familial wealth, housing, a postsecondary education, healthcare, a relative amount of personal freedom (namely, no children or dependents), and of course little to no debt.

Additionally, and perhaps less recognized, "love," when used to procure labor, renders this labor less refusable, less serious, and ultimately, less like labor at all. If one truly loves something then the labor is not only the reward, but it is an act of self-actualization. The danger in this neoliberal ideology is the way in which it reconfigures work as something that is not work at all, and in doing so, makes any and all demands on behalf of one's labor illegitimate. Under this mantra, work is no longer work, it is something one pursues for spiritual and existential fulfillment rather than a wage and health benefits. In this way, "do what you love" works to naturalize exploitation, because "loving" one's labor renders it non-labor. As Marxist feminists have long argued, the invocation of "love" to extract unwaged, unrecognized labor both undergirds waged labor, and characterizes feminine labor in a capitalist system.[65] Speaking to the unwaged labor of housework, Silvia Federici asserts, "Capital had to convince us that it is a natural, unavoidable, and even fulfilling activity to make us accept working without a wage."[66] Federici's assertion highlights how by rendering certain kinds of work spiritually or existentially fulfilling, the legitimacy of a wage for this very labor becomes suspect; in other words, framing some labors as "natural" or the object of one's love and affection works towards its illegitimacy as a waged endeavor. In a similar vein, "do what you love" compels free, or very nearly free, labor from individuals under the guise of love. Examining the figure of the fashion intern in the next section, I argue that the ideology of "do what you love" sustains precarious employment and renders the labor of fashion interns non-work.

As I discuss further below, while an exploited labor class, interns simultaneously possess some amount of social capital that other fashion workers, such as those manufacturing clothes, or even those selling them, do not, an aspect of labor stratification in the industry that while still exploitative, is vastly distinct in its effects. I assert that examining the fashion intern illustrates the ways in which the feminization of work and "do what you love" collude to disadvantage those most impacted by student indebtedness: Latinas and black women, whose representation—whether in popular media or high profile lawsuits—is largely absent from this labor pool.[67] The ideology of "do what you love" is most pervasive within industries that possess a high degree of social prestige (such as the culture industries of fashion, film, writing, and music, as well as academia), and less so within professions that perform more materially necessary labor (such as manual and custodial labor, food and retail services, and the health professions), which makes the figure of the fashion intern, whose labor is most often glamorized, an especially apt case for the present study. Examining the figure of the fashion intern below, I argue that the ideology of "do what you love," in its existential guidance merely calcifies the very structural hierarchies of economic class, race, and sex that its promise implicitly offers to transcend, particularly because it predominates in industries that rely on a large swath of underpaid and unpaid labor. As I outline below, the stratifications among women evident in the AAUW's research on student debt are reproduced in the composition of fashion interns, a phenomenon I assert is made possible through the imperative to "do what you love" amidst the feminization of work.

Fashion Interns and Free Labor

Fashion is not possible without free labor. As Lauren Sherman, writing on the industry website *Fashionista* states, "If we don't have unpaid assistants working on set, or in the office, magazines wouldn't get published, film wouldn't get developed, and fashion shows wouldn't run so smoothly."[68] These "assistants" Sherman mentions are interns: individuals who fill positions within fashion brands, design houses and fashion magazines, under the guise that they will receive professional tutelage and skills, with the promise of a job upon its completion. However, these promises are rarely fulfilled. As the now more than thirty lawsuits filed since 2010 evidence, intern labor most typically does not lead to a paid position but rather another internship, and the "skills" one acquires during these stints are most often the reproductive labor necessary to maintaining any corporate entity or business: answering phones, relaying messages, maintaining emails, organizing and cleaning the offices, running errands, and other administrative tasks.[69] However, as Sherman's quote highlights, despite the crucial function this labor provides, it remains unwaged.

The phenomenon of the fashion intern is part of the broader proliferation of precarious labor forms marked by "instability, the absence of legal contracts (of employment abiding by legal standards), lack of protection and social benefits, [and] lack of collective agreement of employment, and low wages."[70] In a 2010 Economic Policy Institute report on the labor of interns, researchers Kathryn Anne Edwards and Alexander Hertel-Fernandez identify the 2008 recession as a turning point in intern labor, as, post-recession, corporations move towards replacing waged-workers with the free, or virtually free, labor of interns.[71] This trend points towards the broader austerity measures enacted in the wake of the 2008 recession. The proliferation of precarious labor forms, such as interns, adjuncts, freelancers, and other independent-contract workers, are a symptom of a larger shift made possible by neoliberal reforms and the dismantling of what little security was attached to labor prior to the 2008 recession.[72] While no one keeps a precise count of how many paid and/or unpaid internships exist at a given moment, a 2008 National Association of Colleges and Employers report found fifty percent of graduating

college students had held internships, a drastic increase when compared to a Northwestern University study that evidenced a mere seventeen percent in 1992.[73] As Ross Perlin argues in *Intern Nation: How to Earn Nothing and Learn Little in the Brave New Economy*, the proliferation of this labor form has effectively become "a mainstream experience after the recession began," and as Andrew Ross asserts, the very waged and salary positions held out as promises to interns remain "nice work if you can get it."[74]

While intern labor is utilized across the culture industries, the fashion industry stands as the most iconic. This iconicity is due in large part to the numerous television shows (not to mention films and magazine profiles) of this worker. It is, as Annemarie Strassel observes, a "glamorized form of labor" that remains culturally unrecognizable because of this.[75] Several reality television shows emerging over the last ten years have specifically centered on the figure of the fashion intern: *Running in Heels* (2009), *Kell on Earth* (2010), *The Rachel Zoe Project* (2008–13), *The Fashionista Diaries* (2007), and *The City* (2008–10), a spin-off of another hit reality television series *The Hills* (2006–10). In all of these productions, a young person (usually a feminine woman but also sometimes a feminine man) travels to a big city in order to "pay their dues" at a leading fashion company. The audience follows their misadventures and mishaps while they struggle to "make it" in the industry. Unclear, however, is what exactly constitutes "making it." In *The City* for instance, the show's overarching narrative follows the main character, Whitney Port, concluding her internship with Diane Von Furstenberg with a position at *Elle* magazine, and then selling a clothing line to Bergdorf Goodman via a successful fashion show in Bryant Park during New York City's notoriously competitive and prohibitively expensive Fashion Week. Not only is this narrative arc implausible for most every other intern, but it elides terribly the ways in which Port's lifestyle is impossible based on the incomes and work schedules of actual interns. Further, this narrative arc reframes Port's familial background as irrelevant to her success. Port's familial wealth and social capital warranted her inclusion in the reality television show *The Hills* (that followed a wealthy, white set of teenagers in Orange County, California), which led to her role in *The City*. *The City's* portrayal of Port, both documentary realist in its aesthetic and entirely implausible, renders the very factors that guaranteed her success (i.e., familial wealth and social networks that include television producers) irrelevant, and reframes her rise within the fashion industry as fueled by her "love" of fashion.

In contrast to Port's implausible account is the case of Diana Wang. The case that served as the basis for a 2012 class-action lawsuit, Wang's story both reproduces and departs from the archetypal narrative presented throughout pop culture:

> In August 2011 Xuedan "Diana" Wang began her "dream" position as the "head accessories intern" at the legendary fashion magazine *Harper's Bazaar* after graduating from Ohio State. Upending her life in Colombus, she moved to New York City only to find herself working as many as fifty-five hours a week without pay. She supervised eight other interns, ran menial errands, and hauled bags of clothes between publicity firms. On some days Wang was unable to eat lunch until 4pm and worked as late as 10pm with no break for dinner. Five months after her internship began, Wang concluded her work as a glorified messenger service for the magazine with no job offer and little professional experience that might help her gain a foothold in the fashion industry. It was her seventh unpaid internship.[76]

Diana's story is unfortunately not unique. In fact, it is quite similar to another fashion intern's story, Lauren Ballinger, who in her last semester at the American University of Paris "saved one credit before graduating to use toward an internship at *W*," a leading U.S. fashion magazine.[77] "Ms. Ballinger was paid $12.00 a day to work in *W*'s Accessories

Department," working from eight or nine each morning until eight to ten every night, "packing, organizing, and delivering accessories to editors."[78] Further, Ballinger, who took the position as a part of her career training, was not only trained by other interns, and thus did not receive the insider industry training nor the networking opportunities she was promised, but the *W* editors refused to provide Ballinger with a recommendation upon the completion of her internship, effectively withholding from her her last remaining academic credit.[79]

Wang and Ballinger's stories are not exceptional but are symptomatic of a larger trend in compelling free labor from a largely young pool of educated, ambitious individuals. Overwhelmingly, this labor pool across culture industries is female, with 77 percent of the intern labor workforce woman-identified.[80] This aspect of the labor pool not only reflects the ways in which cultural representations of the fashion intern compels young women and feminine-leaning persons to pursue it, but also points to how the skills crucial to creative industries, such as flexibility, creativity, and an aesthetic sensibility, is gendered largely feminine, whether a male-identified or female-identified person performs it. Speaking to the topic of feminine labor, Donna Haraway suggests that:

> To be feminized is to be made extremely vulnerable; able to be disassembled, reassembled, exploited as reserve labor force; seen less as workers than as servers; subjected to time arrangements on and off the paid job that make a mockery of a limited work day; leading an existence that always borders on the obscene, or out of place.[81]

The labor required of interns—free, reproductive in nature, and invisible, with erratic and overly long work hours—is overwhelmingly feminine. As Minh-ha Pham observes, the feminine labor that fashion requires contributes to the perceived triviality of fashion, which works towards its dismissal as an object of study or critique.[82] I suggest that the gender of fashion is crucial to the perpetuation of the kind of labor exploitation characterized by the fashion intern, because in its triviality, invisibility, and lack of a wage it is rationalized as not 'real' labor and thus not 'real' exploitation, and also because the persons doing it (i.e., young, feminine persons) are culturally expected to "love" this work. In effect, this labor is naturalized in ways that render it non-work.

In addition to gender, the labor of interns reproduces the racial hierarchies evident in the AAUW's research regarding student debt: Latinas and black women are largely absent, both in media representations and high-profile intern lawsuits. This lack of representation points to the ways in which the feminization of work in culture industries works towards the exclusion of the most indebted: Latinas and black women. In this way, the "do what you love" ethos that justifies the precarity exemplary in the figure of the fashion intern also legitimates the racial exclusions of the fashion industry broadly. "Do what you love'" is not then merely a means with which to reorient workers to a precarious labor market, but a way to reframe the structural exclusions that reproduce industries like fashion as predominantly white.[83] In this way, the unpaid internship—of which the fashion intern is but one—is not only a feminized job, but a racialized one.

To be clear, while most of the intern workers within the fashion industry are either completing degrees (and the internship constitutes a portion of their education) or possess one, not all intern workers are young, idealistic twenty-somethings. For many individuals working as interns, their hopes of obtaining "success" are diluted through a seemingly endless series of internships, effecting what Alex Williams terms "a permanent intern underclass" whose inability to secure waged employment is upheld through programs forever holding out the promise of a job with a paycheck.[84] Wang's story states that her position at *Harper's* was her seventh, while in another high-profile case (that also

lead to a lawsuit), Eric Glatt, who holds a Masters degree in Business Administration in addition to a Bachelor of Arts, was forty-four and had just finished his fourth internship when he began organizing on behalf of interns.[85] This age difference makes sense when considering the larger context within which it exists: namely, the dissolution of paid positions within the culture industries and their replacement with unpaid interns. Doing work within the culture industry (whether fashion, film, or music) means doing it for free, or very nearly so. This phenomenon stands in stark contrast to the promises extended by the internship itself: a future with a paycheck. Internships are held out as temporary stopovers on one's way to something bigger and better, when in reality, the internship is a mode of work that is both temporary and short-lived, exemplifying precarious working conditions with little end in sight. This exact reality is captured in the case of Alec Dudson, who after completing several sequential internships, at 29 started *Intern* magazine, a biannual glossy that provides articles, tips, and inspiration for what *The New York Times* tellingly refers to as "the faceless drones who keep the style industries humming."[86] Dudson's venture is not alone; there is *FindSpark*, a New York jobs network for recent graduates that provides meet-ups and events with themes such as "follow your passion," and "your ideal brand" that "draw hundreds."[87] There are also several blogs detailing the daily toils of interns in various industries: *Life of an Investment Banking Summer Slave*, *Anonymous Production Assistant* (for interns working within the film and television industries), *Intern-Anonymous* (for all interns), and most relevant to the present study, *Fashion Intern Problems* and *The Devil Pays Nada* (for fashion interns). These cultural phenomena not only point towards the widespread proliferation of this labor form, but also towards its suspended, if not indefinite, nature. For Glatt, who is a founding member of the group Intern Labor Rights, internship labor operates as "an institutionalized form of wage theft."[88] In this way, many individuals express feeling "trapped" in a cycle that, the longer one is in it seems all the more difficult to leave because one has already put in "dues" towards that elusive future job.

This aspect of their status as workers is exacerbated by the fact that most intern workers are already fearful of speaking up or expressing grievances because of the competitive and tenuous nature of their position. This level of competition is no more apparent than in the world of high fashion, when in 2012, thousands of individuals bid through an online auction for a chance to intern, and specifically, work for free at Chanel, Balenciaga, and Valentino.[89] It is this level of competition made possible by both the post-recession hiring practices, but also the ideology of doing what one loves, that maintains the pervasive belief that should one leave there is always already someone else willing to fill your space. As Edwards and Hertel-Fernandez outline in their study, "The crucial role of internships in obtaining later employment and the highly competitive market for placement means that no one student has an incentive to report to their employer, even in cases of blatant abuses, since another student will readily work for free."[90] As one former intern worker, Rachel Watson, stated when discussing her lawsuit against British fashion house Alexander McQueen: "How could I confront my employer at the time when they held all the cards to my future in the industry?"[91] Watson's comment speaks to the way in which the very purpose of the internship—industry affiliation—simultaneously serves as the underlying punitive threat. In other words, by offering one's labor for free in exchange for a promise, one is already at a disadvantage.

This disadvantaged position interns occupy in relation to their employers is structured within the very terms established to prevent their exploitation. Established in 1938, and later strengthened with six guidelines via a 1947 Supreme Court case, the Fair Labor Standards Act (hereafter, FLSA) provides the terms against which the legality of an internship is measured. The guidelines, meant to differentiate between an employee and trainee, do so through the following guidelines: a shared assumption that the labor

performed is for vocational and/or educational purposes (and is thus training rather than employment); that the training benefits the trainees; that trainees do not replace regular employees (but work under their supervision); that the employer receive no immediate advantage from the trainee's activities (and may even experience such training as an impediment); that trainees are not entitled to a job upon completion of the training, and that there is a mutual understanding that trainees are not entitled to wages.[92] If all six guidelines are met, then the "employee" is legally considered to be a "trainee," or in this case an intern. However, there are several crucial limits to these guidelines, the first of which concerns the wageless nature of this work. Originally intended to establish guidelines for apprenticeships that were for manual labor and production work, these guidelines cannot and do not account for how the U.S. labor market has changed dramatically, exemplified here in the creative labor necessary to culture industries like fashion.[93] As Edwards and Hertel-Fernandez note, "A serious problem surrounding unpaid interns is [that] they are often not considered employees and therefore are not protected by employment discrimination laws," such as legislation that protects against sexual harassment, and discrimination based on race, age, or physical and/or mental ability.[94] This is because the very statutes that are intended to protect employees in the workplace are established on the grounds of a relationship wherein the employer provides the employee with a wage, the very thing that mediates and defines them as such. Further, these guidelines "permit (and even incentivize) the replacement of regular workers with unpaid college students and recent graduates," because it sanctions the employer's practice of compelling free labor from intern workers under the guise of "educational purposes." The supposed "educational purposes" are evident in the mediating body that most often arranges the internships: university programs that possess corporate contracts with the internship offering agencies.[95] Indeed, it is difficult to imagine any situation wherein free labor is not to the immediate advantage of an employer (or in this case, the educator). It is this aspect (i.e., the "educational purposes" that render the labor unwaged) of the unpaid positions that fosters their growth, because it is always to the employers' advantage to obtain labor for free, rather than having to invest in a waged worker. This leads to what is perhaps the most glaring problem to the proliferation of this labor: the way in which it limits the participation to students who can afford to work for free, "effectively institutionalizing socioeconomic disparities."[96]

The normalization of unpaid internships throughout the culture industries means that these industries—like fashion—are increasingly exclusive, reserved for those with familial and/or industry connections, and the means with which to support unpaid work. As noted in a 2012 report conducted by *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, internships remain the single most important factor when considering a college graduate for employment.[97] However, because student debt is a necessary burden for some students seeking a degree, unpaid internships—and thus some career paths—are not an option. This exclusionary entry to internships has implications regarding the composition of the very culture industries relying on intern labor. As internship servicers such as InternMatch have shown, unpaid internships contribute to the lack of diversity in certain industries.[98] Long criticized for its exclusionary nature, fashion has most recently endured numerous public condemnations concerning structural racism. Considering the industry's reliance on unpaid internships, it is perhaps unsurprising to find that women of color, most prominently Latinas and black women, experience difficulty succeeding in, or gaining entry into the fashion world.[99] Additionally, when considering the ethos of "do what you love," it seems that very few, and perhaps more importantly, very few women of color, are actually able to do so.

What the fashion intern points to then is how the immaterial, precarious labor of the culture industries manifests in highly gendered, racialized ways. Represented as a

glamorous lifestyle, the fashion intern typically does not earn wages, nor does she (and she is typically a "she") obtain the waged position she was promised. The fashion intern's labor (like other precarious workers of the culture industries) is feminine in that it remains unwaged and highly flexible, yet performs a socially reproductive function. Indeed, her unwaged labor is crucial to fashion's production. Similarly, when examined in the context of mass debt, the fashion intern is not merely a feminized job but a racialized one, meaning that it perpetuates the whiteness of the fashion industry through its exclusivity (i.e., being able to perform demanding work without a wage). Further, like other precarious labor forms, the fashion intern's labor is compelled and naturalized through the ideology of "do what you love"; because it is work that one "loves," one should perform it for free, and because one "loves" it (and is willing to perform it for free), it is not work but rather an extension of one's highest self. In sum, examining the fashion intern illustrates how the feminization of work and the ethos of "do what you love" collude to disadvantage those most negatively impacted by student debt—Latinas and black women—and also perpetuates the whiteness of the fashion industry itself.

Conclusion

Examining the figure of the fashion intern, I have outlined how the labor of interns performs work crucial to fashion's production, yet remains largely unwaged. I situate the fashion intern within a broader field of precarious workers, whose labor has been made unstable through the absence of legal contracts and the lack of protection and social benefits, collective agreement of employment, and low wages (if any wages at all). I have argued that a crucial part of the proliferation of precarious labor forms is the ideology of "do what you love," that compels low-wage, or entirely unwaged labor from individuals through the rhetoric of "love." Through this ideology, labor is rendered less refusable, less serious, and ultimately, less like labor at all; because it is work that one "loves," one should perform it for free, and because one "loves" it (and is willing to perform it for free), it is not work but rather an extension of one's highest self. This ideology is most pervasive in the very industries marked by precarity, such as the fashion industry, and thus bears influence on who can participate in them. In other words, if the labor necessary to the culture industries is unwaged (especially the entry-level positions like internships), then the industry is structurally foreclosed to those who cannot afford to work for free. As the AAUW research suggests, persons who cannot afford to work for free are most typically Latinas and black women, and indeed, their absence is evident in representations of the fashion intern, whether in popular media or high-profile lawsuits. In this way, the ideology of "do what you love," calcifies the very structural hierarchies of economic class, race, and sex that its promise implicitly offers to transcend. Taken in the context of mass student debt, "do what you love," as an ideology that sustains precarious employment in the culture industries, bears relevance for what these industries look like. If unwaged work is the requirement for entry, then certainly those able to do so will comprise the bulk of its workers.

Notes

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28. Miller et al., *Deeper in Debt*, 20.
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34. Miller et al., *Deeper in Debt*, 20.
35. Miller et al., *Deeper in Debt*, 32.
36. Lazzarato, *Indebted Man,* 7–8.
37. Ross, "Anti-Social," 29.
38. Miller, *Deeper in Debt*, 20–23.
39. Lazzarato, *Indebted Man*, 29–38.
40. Lazzarato, *Indebted Man*, 38.
41. Ross, "Anti-Social Debts," 31.
42. Miller, *Deeper in Debt*, 30.
43. I am referring to employment in the professional trades, and the knowledge economy generally, that requires baccalaureate education. As Ross argues, "it is impossible to ignore that workforce entrants, especially the college educated, have to take on large debt burdens simply to prepare themselves for employability. An increasingly larger share of wages is going to servicing the debts incurred to meet the basic mental and physical requirements demanded for modern work." See Ross, "Mortgaging the Future," 23.
44. Lazzarato, *Indebted Man*, 9.
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Bio



Elizabeth Verklan

Elizabeth Verklan is currently Assistant Professor of women, gender, and sexuality studies at Cottey College. Her first book, *Objects of Desire: Transnational Feminism, Feminist Inquiry, and Global Fashion*, under

contract with University of Illinois Press, examines how sweatshops are framed and represented in and to the U.S.


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David L. Reznik, "Review of 'Media and Culture in the US Jewish Labor Movement: Sweating for Democracy in the Interwar Era' by Brian Dolber (Palgrave Macmillan)," *Lateral 7.1* (2018).

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Book Reviews
Issue 7.1 (Spring 2018) — Marxism and Cultural Studies

Review of *Media and Culture in the US Jewish Labor Movement: Sweating for Democracy in the Interwar Era* by Brian Dolber (Palgrave Macmillan)

David Reznik

ABSTRACT Brian Dolber comprehensively explores the cultural and media-related developments of an important American social movement during its most transformative time: the varying business enterprises, community associations, party structures, and social institutions that collectively constituted 'US Jewish labor' in the decades between WWI and II. Dolber infuses his historical analysis with a nuance and urgency that ensures his readers will neither complacently shrug off the interwar era as limited in its relevance to our contemporary conjuncture nor nostalgically long for a supposedly romantic period of leftist political organizing in the US Indeed, a tacit takeaway drawn from Dolber's book is that activists today (especially those experimenting with alternative media and cultural formations) can benefit greatly from both the inspiring examples of past precedence and a sober acceptance of the potential pitfalls that can threaten their efforts.

Media and Culture in the US Jewish Labor Movement: Sweating for Democracy in the Interwar Era. By Brian Dolber. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, 256 pp. (hardcover) ISBN 978 3 319 43547 3. US List: $109.99.

Brian Dolber comprehensively explores the cultural and media-related developments of an important American social movement during its most transformative time: the varying business enterprises, community associations, party structures, and social institutions that collectively constituted "US Jewish labor" in the decades between WWI and WWII. Dolber infuses his historical analysis with nuance and urgency ensuring that his readers will neither complacently shrug off the interwar era as limited in its relevance to our contemporary conjuncture nor nostalgically long for a supposedly romantic period of leftist political organizing in the US. Indeed, a tacit takeaway drawn from Dolber's book is that activists today (especially those experimenting with alternative media and cultural formations) can benefit greatly from both the inspiring examples of past precedence and a sober acceptance of the potential pitfalls that can threaten their efforts.

Throughout the text, Dolber defines his terms carefully, providing ideas like "social unionism," "organic intellectualism," "cosmopolitan proletarianism," "historical bloc," "industrial feminism," and "ethnopolitical identity" to act as conceptual footholds for readers traversing his dizzyingly detailed account of US Jewish labor's trajectory through turbulent times. Focusing on the cultural initiatives of "education, mass media, and participatory activity," Dolber emphasizes how a complex and often-contradictory

constellation of American Jewish actors and groups helped "bridge the radicalism of the turn of the century with the emergence of the modern labor movement during the Great Depression" (4).

Dolber's narrative begins with the emergence of influential US Jewish left-liberal newspaper *Forward* during WWI. As talismanic US Jewish émigré Baruch Charney Vladeck assumed its helm, *Forward* became a cultural vessel for navigating several important media shifts in the 1920s. These shifts included a growing dependence on advertising (especially targeting increasingly ethnically-defined market segments), the rise of photography and short-form journalism for an expanding and linguistically diverse readership, and the pressures of balancing competing political interests amidst the fragmentation of US labor into sectarian conflict. Vladeck ultimately charted *Forward* down an assimilatory path that interpolated its readers "into the matrices of an evolving consumer society" (15), while desperately attempting to prove that "Jewish national identity was compatible with American identity" (40). This same calculus informed Vladeck's embrace of radio (as evidenced by the rise of WEVD) as a media tool for protecting the economic sustainability of US Jewish labor, while ensuring that "the Yiddish Socialism of the prewar era[...] became American unionism, advancing social democracy within mass culture's limits" (111).

Vladeck's strategic capitulations are juxtaposed with the fiery defiance of two of his contemporaries, Fannia Cohn and J. B. S. Hardman. These garment union leaders dedicated their energies to unwaveringly principled cultural projects, the former leading the creation of "worker education" programming to galvanize women laborers' engagement in the public sphere, and the latter working to cultivate radical democracy across/within existing labor groups through several splinter organizations and newspapers. Though their efforts were eventually marginalized by pragmatic realities US Jewish labor faced within the Great Depression, "the cultural tools Cohn and Hardman developed would prove invaluable to the rise of a national labor movement" (81).

The New Deal signals a moment of fundamental transition in the book. This bureaucratized political economic response to the Great Depression created a host of challenges for the media and culture of US Jewish labor. While *Forward,* WEVD, and the garment unions' initiatives "provided the basis for new forms of mass entertainment that reflected the era's working-class ethos" (118), the rise of mass organizations like the CIO and the adoption by leftist parties of the "Popular Front strategy" resulted in the incorporation/erasure of American Jewish ethnic identity within the national labor movement amidst a growing tide of populist anti-Semitism across the international landscape.

As a result, US Jewish labor media and culture during the latter half of the 1930's consolidated around anti-Nazi consumer boycotting, shaping a movement that sought "new articulations of ethnicity" (156). Specifically, the founding by Vladeck of the boycott-leading Jewish Labor Committee helped produce a "social movement consumerism" that united Jewish Americans "across class and ideological lines" (171) and hastened a qualitative cultural transformation of US Jewish labor that, in retrospect, had already been years in the making. This was no longer a movement of "radical workers who happened to be Yiddish-speaking Jews; rather they were Jews who understood themselves as one constituency within a liberal New Deal" (181) and "maintained strong connections to the US state" (187) in opposition to the Nazi threat overseas.

The unresolved conflicts and debates repressed within such political accommodation became manifest in the fracturing of US Jewish labor, especially over the question of newspaper guilds and writers' unions. Otherwise ignored divisions within the movement

began to spill over, as the management of several press-related organizations implemented reactionary measures, including prolonged legal battles and strike breaking tactics, against members of what had heretofore been understood to be "their own" community, ethnically and politically. By World War II, Hardman's vision of "true democratic discourse" (212), both within and outside the movement, had stultified, and it became increasingly difficult for the remains of American Jewish labor "to challenge the institutions of the US political economy—the corporations, the government, the trade unions, and the media—in the coming decades" (213).

Indeed, by 2001, only a small group of activists are on hand to protest outside the headquarters of WEVD as it is being sold to Disney and converted into the flagship radio station for ESPN Sports, a particularly savage irony given the parent company's legacy of anti-unionism and anti-Semitism (227). Dolber borrows from Raymond Williams in asking whether the "residual culture" emerging from the US Jewish labor movement and its media and culture during the pivotal interwar era will be a "productive, transformative force" or simply leave us with "a painful desire to return to something that never was" (229). His book, though often only hinting at rather than explicitly unpacking the myriad themes of contemporary relevance, presents a worthy case study for political organizers hoping to leverage social media and other emergent cultural platforms for radical change moving forward.

Bio



David Reznik

David L. Reznik is Associate Professor of Sociology and advisor for the Cultural Studies minor at Bridgewater College. His book, *New Jews?: Race and American Jewish Identity in 21st-Century Film*, is available in paperback. He has also written on the everyday challenges and utopian dreams of contemporary independent filmmakers. Currently, he is working on a narrative podcast series about the ethnic identity politics of an infamous 2006 murder trial in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia.

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Lateral
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Dana Horton, "Review of *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* by Christina Sharpe (Duke University Press)," *Lateral 7.1* (2018).

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Book Reviews
Issue 7.1 (Spring 2018) — Marxism and Cultural Studies

Review of *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* by Christina Sharpe (Duke University Press)

Dana Horton

ABSTRACT Christina Sharpe's "In the Wake: On Blackness and Being" addresses issues of citizenship, racial violence, and black mortality, meshing her personal experiences surrounding death and "the wake" with a sharp critique of cultural structures, as well as a reimagining of slavery, funeral, and death metaphors. In the wake of so many "ongoing state-sanctioned legal and extralegal murders of Black people," Sharpe's argument that black death is a foundational aspect of American citizenship encourages readers to acknowledge the antiblackness embedded in the past, present, and future of American (and by extension, Transatlantic) democracy (7). With the continued and encouraged proliferation of black death in the global diaspora, Sharpe's study will, hopefully, usher in more woke scholarship that questions pervasive antiblackness.

In the Wake: On Blackness and Being. By Christina Sharpe. Durham, NC and London, UK: Duke University Press, 2016, 192 pp. (paperback) ISBN 978-0-8223-6294-4. US List: $22.95.

On December 30, 2017, Erica Garner, a Black Lives Matter activist and daughter of Eric Garner, who was killed by police in Staten Island, New York, died of a heart attack at the young age of 27.[1] Garner's tragic and untimely death exemplifies the immense burden that being black in America has on African Americans. Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* interrogates that burden by addressing issues of citizenship, racial violence, and black mortality. Sharpe's book meshes her personal experiences surrounding death and "the wake" with a sharp critique of cultural structures, as well as a reimagining of slavery, funeral, and death metaphors. In the wake of so many "ongoing state-sanctioned legal and extralegal murders of Black people," Sharpe's argument that black death is a foundational aspect of American citizenship encourages readers to acknowledge the antiblackness embedded in the past, present, and future of American (and by extension, transatlantic) democracy (7).

Sharpe's methodology takes up the ideas of "the wake and wake work." Sharpe articulates "that to be *in* the wake is to occupy and to be occupied by the continuous and changing present of slavery's as yet unresolved unfolding" (13–14). To perform "wake work" is to labor within the space of paradoxes surrounding black citizenship, identity, and civil rights. Sharpe examines writers such as Dionne Brand, Kamau Braithwaite, and M. NourbeSe Philip, who rhetorically and visually represent these paradoxes in their writing, and draws on scholars such as Saidiya Hartman, Kimberly Juanita Brown, and Frank Wilderson to enhance her exploration of the embodied and material fragments that survived slavery's

afterlives. The goal of Sharpe's project is not to find "political, juridical, or…philosophical answers" to the problem of black exclusion but to analyze how writers, artists, and musicians aesthetically depict slavery's ubiquitous and contradictory presence in transatlantic spaces (14). Sharpe's unique methodology differs from many books on the subject of black exclusion because her project "looks…to current quotidian disasters in order to ask what, if anything, survives…insistent black exclusion" and analyzes how cultural studies texts handle this phenomenon (14). Sharpe critiques the crossroads of many structures: material structures, such as slave ships and the contemporary impact of "the wake, the shop, the hold, and the weather;" public structures, such as sidewalks and other seemingly communal spaces where Trayvon Martin, and other black people, are unwelcomed; and institutional structures, such as academia, where black scholars are expected to adopt research methods that destroy their ontology.

Each chapter signifies a particular aspect of the slave ship and its contemporary impact on transatlantic blackness. Chapter One, "The Wake," describes Sharpe's methodology, as well as the family deaths that influenced her decision to partake in "wake work." Chapter Two, "The Ship," examines the genealogy of a slave ship, from the occupants on the ship to the construction of the ship to the remnants that the ship leaves behind. Sharpe features an image of a Haitian girl, after the Haiti earthquake, with the word "Ship" scrawled across her forehead, which Sharpe reads as indicative of being in the wake, where the girl is simultaneously alive and dead. Chapter Three, "The Hold," draws an astute comparison between the hold of a slave ship, where slaves were tightly packed in small spaces, to prison structures that hold black bodies, ensuring that the prison replicates "the logics, architectural, and otherwise of the slave ship (in and across the global Black Diaspora)" (75). This chapter critiques images of the prison hold in the multiple global locations, from a prisoners' sleep cell in Malawi to Oscar Grant's cell phone photograph of his murderer, Johannes Mehserle, where Sharpe poignantly observes that positioning of the photograph places Grant in the hold and Mehserle as policing the hold. Chapter Four, "The Weather," is the book's conclusion, where Sharpe reads weather as "the totality of our environments…the total climate…and that climate is antiblack" (104). The climate of antiblackness, the stifling air and tainted water, is what leads to the never-ending list of black deaths. Sharpe complicates traditional conversations about weather by treating weather as an engulfing and inescapable state, rather than a singular event.

The book's primary strength is Sharpe's interdisciplinary approach towards revising the language associated with the afterlives of slavery. "Woke" is a word that has reemerged in contemporary spaces and refers to acts of social consciousness. It is a description of what happens after a person is awake and cognizant of social justice concerns. Sharpe's discussion of "wake work" helped me understand the concept of wokeness better as well as reflect on what it means to adapt woke practices. A section of the book that I would have liked to see expanded upon was Chapter Three's discussion of Barack Obama's reactions to the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy and the death of fifteen-year-old Hadiya Pendleton, who sang at his second inauguration. Sharpe utilizes this example to demonstrate how Obama had "succumbed to the logic of the hold" through his acceptance of black death (97). Since Obama's presidential reign perfectly exemplifies slavery's afterlife, a longer discussion of the global impact of his presidency would make this book even stronger. Obama's contentious relationship with several black leaders is, arguably, a result of his refusal to step outside of the confines of the hold.

In the Wake: On Blackness and Being engages with twenty-first century cultural issues through an exploration of race, gender, and violence. Sharpe's poetic and accessible prose can serve as a model for anyone who wants to challenge traditional conventions of academic writing. This book is perfect for a graduate seminar about "The Black Atlantic"

and complements texts by Toni Morrison, Charles Johnson, Frantz Fanon, and Claudia Rankine. With the continued and encouraged proliferation of black death in the global diaspora, Sharpe's study will, hopefully, usher in more woke scholarship that questions pervasive antiblackness.

Notes

1. Vivian Wang, "Erica Garner, Activist and Daughter of Eric Garner, Dies at 27," *The New York Times*, December 30, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/30/nyregion/erica-garner-dead.html.

Bio



Dana Horton

Dana Horton is an Assistant Professor of English at Mercy College. Dr. Horton earned her Ph.D. in English at Northeastern University and her B.A. in English and African-American Studies at Temple University. Dr. Horton's current book project, *12 Years a Slave-Master: Gender, Genre, and Race in Post-Neo- Slave Narratives*, examines representations of black and white female slave-owners in twenty-first century American literature, film, and music. Her areas of specialization include Black Atlantic Literature, Black Women Writers, Slave Narratives, Postcolonial Literature, and Feminist Theory. In her free time, Dr. Horton enjoys playing board games, collecting post office memorabilia, and complaining about the current season of *Scandal*.

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Marcelo del Castillo-Mussot, "Review of 'Global Entertainment Media: A Critical Introduction' by Lee Artz (Blackwell)," *Lateral 7.1* (2018).

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Book Reviews
Issue 7.1 (Spring 2018) — Marxism and Cultural Studies

Review of *Global Entertainment Media: A Critical Introduction* by Lee Artz (Blackwell)

Marcelo del Castillo-Mussot

ABSTRACT Artz gives overwhelming evidence of how the cultural hegemony of individualism and consumerism is promoted everywhere by transnational media corporations (TNMCs), so that current social relations in capitalism are reproduced and reinforced. The reader can get a clear outlook of TNMCs and their impact on the diversity, hybridization, and standardization of global culture and outlooks.

Global Entertainment Media: A Critical Introduction by Lee Artz. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2015, 280 pp. (paperback) ISBN 978–1–118–95543–7. US List: $51.95.

The book presents the complex relations between economic power and entertainment media in a world where some transnational corporations (TNCs) have reached global dimensions. Besides the obvious drive for increased profitability of transnational media corporations (TNMCs) ($2.2 trillion US dollars in 2012 as estimated global media revenue), Artz gives overwhelming evidence of how the cultural hegemony of individualism and consumer ideology (consumerism) is promoted everywhere by TNMCs, so that current social relations in capitalism are reproduced and reinforced.

Concepts thorough the book are presented in a very didactical way. It incorporates vast bibliographical references and brief sections dedicated to various topics such as transnational alliances, neoliberalism, and hegemony. The book's first half focuses on transnational relations in twenty-first century capitalism and transnational media, while the second half, the last four chapters, are dedicated to topics such as cultural hegemony and diversity. Artz emphasizes the increased linkage of national capital into transnational operations: subcontracting, outsourcing, licensing, and co-productions, along with increased joint ventures, mergers, acquisitions, and foreign direct investments.

Artz also describes some transitions of firms and conglomerates from regional to global environments to media leaders. In particular, Rupert Murdoch's News Corp includes vast media enterprises (for instance, Fox News in the US, two thirds of printed media in Australia) in four continents and brings in $700 million in profits annually. Artz also provides lists and summaries of top transnational entertainment media. For instance, Artz provides a list of the eight largest TNMCs, their subsidiaries, joint ventures, and director interlocks (members of a corporate board of directors serving on the boards of multiple corporations) primarily related to broadcasting and film. In addition to transnational joint ventures with local firms, many of these TNMCs brand their co-production as their own. For example, Bertelsmann, the largest transnational operator in Europe, has its RTL TV brand in ten European countries.

In the global economy, nations are linked to each other through the transnationalization of the production process, of finance, and of the circuits of capital accumulation, and no single nation-state can remain totally insulated from the global economy or the cultural superstructure of global capitalism. Therefore, to many people in the world, entertainment appears natural because of its ubiquity and pervasive presence.

In light of recent neoliberal economic transformations, including various forms of privatization, the increasing size and power of TNMCs has devastated part of the public sphere by dismantling public media and curbing media production alternative voices and social groups. We live in a world where Pokémon, ESPN, Jackie Chan, You Tube, and Disney are popular. Originally produced in Columbia, the telenovela *Yo Soy Betty, La Fea*, has been translated into thirteen languages and broadcast in seventy-four countries (including the Americanized version, *Ugly Betty*), but few know that Colombian media success is partly driven by the non-union labor of people working under repressive anti-labor laws.

When dealing with key concepts such as democracy and political power, the author takes care to emphasize throughout the entire book the fuzzy distinction in the content spread by most mass media corporations between what is entertainment and what is entertainment news and ideology, since media produce and sell products that explicitly transmit and elicit different symbolic meanings, values, norms, and beliefs. The hegemonic leadership of the capitalist class depends on widespread consent to these social relations by other social classes and groups. In particular, cultural hegemony, understood as a social process of moral, philosophical, and political leadership with the active consent of other important social groups, is analyzed in some detail in the second half of the book. Global media domination is related to cultural resistance and social negotiation.

The influence of economic and social peculiarities (such as language and cultural barriers) on cultural adaptations and hybridizations are briefly analyzed in the eighth chapter, immediately before the overall conclusion. Since generally smaller transnational media cannot challenge top TNMCs, they could merge, could be absorbed, or must offer joint ventures and myriads of smaller transnational productions. In Asia and Africa, where the political economy of media arises from the legacy of colonialism or protectionist policies, the TNMCs exhibit diverse types of evolutions. However, Nollywood (the film industry of Nigeria) works similarly to Hollywood and Bollywood (the film industry of India) but with smaller budgets and levels of income.

The book offers evidence of how the TNMCs compete among themselves, but they help to maintain the status quo in many ways. For instance, Artz show how consumerism obscures the existence of social classes in stories, and promotes, in-turn, hyper-individualism (like superheroes to the rescue) which is widespread in TNMC products, whereas more realistic stories involving organized or collective citizen actions are rare. He claims that the standardization of diverse local expressions of individualism, consumerism, and spectacular entertainment encourages the acceptance of institutional authority and market values. So, the crucial conclusion is that current social relations in capitalism are reproduced and reinforced by TNMCs.

As transnational capital intrudes further into our daily existence, Artz calls, in the final chapter, for alternative social and cultural means in the collective struggle of humanity to find and make more democratic social relations. Working-class political activity is advised in conjunction with cultural activities. Artz claims that we urgently need to avoid manipulation of human desires and to democratize the media to meet community needs: to educate, entertain, and inform, sharing the diversity of human experiences with humor, drama, and meaning. Drawing on examples of public and community media in Latin

America, he mentions La Nueva Televisora del Sur or TeleSUR, a multi-state funded, pan–Latin American terrestrial and satellite television network sponsored by the governments of Venezuela, Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Uruguay, and Bolivia. TeleSUR transmits voices from working class and indigenous communities across the world, and particularly from Latin America. TeleSUR transmits voices from working class and indigenous communities, particularly from Latin America to across the world. Media content by TNMCs communicates specific constructed meanings; community-run working-class media communicate their own constructions for understanding the world, where workers and citizens can dissent from any official and majority voices.

In summary, although the book is 280 pages and some data on TNMCs should be expanded, it is an ambitious and provocative work that provides very well researched studies on global entertainment and culture. It is packed with empirical information on firms and their networks, and includes a vast bibliography useful for students, researchers, and the general public. Within a solid framework of transnational social and economic relations in current capitalism, the reader can get a clear perspective of TNMCs and their impact on the diversity, hybridization, and standardization of global culture and outlooks.

Bio



Marcelo del Castillo-Mussot

Dr. Marcelo del Castillo-Mussot (Ph.D., University of California, San Diego, 1984) is a full professor of physics at National University of México, México (UNAM), México. He has published more than 90 research articles in physics, interdisciplinary topics, complex systems and sociology.

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Shannon O'Sullivan, "Review of 'Football and Manliness: An Unauthorized Feminist Account of the NFL' by Thomas P. Oates (University of Illinois Press)," *Lateral 7.1* (2018).

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Book Reviews
Issue 7.1 (Spring 2018) — Marxism and Cultural Studies

Review of *Football and Manliness: An Unauthorized Feminist Account of the NFL* by Thomas P. Oates (University of Illinois Press)

Shannon O'Sullivan

ABSTRACT In 'Football and Manliness,' Thomas B. Oates offers a prescient intersectional feminist analysis of the central symbolic place of the National Football League in U.S. culture and politics. In each chapter, Oates provides close readings of various popular media texts, which, despite remaining secondary to the spectacle of televised games, profoundly shape the ideological work the NFL performs in relation to dominant constructions of race, gender, sexuality, and class. These texts include fictionalized cinematic and televised melodramas depicting the internal dynamics of professional football teams; sports media coverage of the NFL draft; self-help books authored by noted NFL coaches; computer-based games, including fantasy league football and Madden NFL; and lastly, the investigative reportage that ignited the NFL concussion scandal. As Oates succinctly posits, "these texts produce a complex but ultimately coherent set of stories about gender, race, and contemporary capitalism" (20).

Football and Manliness: An Unauthorized Feminist Account of the NFL. By Thomas P. Oates. Urbana, Chicago, & Springfield, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017, 232 pp. (paperback) ISBN 978-0-252-08244-3. US List: $25.95.

In Football and Manliness, Thomas B. Oates offers a prescient intersectional feminist analysis of the central symbolic place of the National Football League in US culture and politics. Oates' examination predates former San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick silently protesting racial injustice and police brutality during pregame performances of the national anthem during the 2016 season. In September 2017, African-American players joined Kaepernick in droves by somberly taking a knee as the anthem played, partially in response to President Donald Trump's disparaging remarks rebuking African-American players' rights to free expression. The NFL player-led protests became part of the national conversation on race, police brutality, and free expression for weeks. Oates thoroughly evidences the hegemonic status of the NFL within the interlocking matrix of U.S. culture and politics, especially as it pertains to contested paragons of racialized masculinity and the promotion of shrewd, managerial thinking as a naturalized barometer of masculine prowess and authenticity. Considering the recent player-led protests, Oates' assertion that the NFL constitutes a "generative cultural space" (23) in the United States continues to gain widespread traction.

In the prologue, Oates connects the NFL's unrivaled contemporary popularity, in which the league's programming consistently garners top ratings despite an increasingly

fractured television viewership, with Trump's unlikely ascent to the highest elected office in the United States. He identifies the NFL as a prominent, highly mediated, and increasingly disputed terrain upon which heteronormative white male anxieties about their perceived loss of status in relation to women, people of color, and LGBTQ-identified individuals have played out in formative ways in recent years. In each chapter, Oates provides close readings of various popular media texts, which, despite remaining secondary to the spectacle of televised games, profoundly shape the ideological work the NFL performs in relation to dominant constructions of race, gender, sexuality, and class. These texts include fictionalized cinematic and televised melodramas depicting the internal dynamics of professional football teams; sports media coverage of the NFL draft; self-help books authored by noted NFL coaches; computer-based games, including fantasy league football and *Madden NFL*; and lastly, the investigative reportage that ignited the NFL concussion scandal. As Oates succinctly posits, "these texts produce a complex but ultimately coherent set of stories about gender, race, and contemporary capitalism" (20).

The first two chapters dissect the racial politics of the NFL, in which African-American players are simultaneously surveilled as threats to white male dominance and elevated as objects of desire for the white male gaze. In the first chapter, Oates unpacks how fictionalized film and television dramas centering on professional football reveal the dominant cultural imprint of white male anxieties arising from the inroads women and people of color have made toward equality in the preceding decades. Looking at the Oliver Stone film *Any Given Sunday* (1999), the ESPN dramatic series *Playmakers* (2003), and the USA series *Necessary Roughness* (2011–2013), Oates explicates how these dramatizations reinforce the perceived sanctity of white male supremacist homosocial spaces. Although 70 percent of the league's players are Black, the coaching staff and key leadership-based player positions, such as quarterback, remain mostly occupied by white players. All three representations depict independent Black players eschewing homosocial conventions of humility and self-sacrifice, as they eclipse their white counterparts in on-field performance and occasionally off-field popularity. Oates pinpoints that portraying these Black players as initial threats to the disciplinary cohesion of their teams speaks to real-life concerns about the containment of Black masculinity in both sports and society. Despite some subversive interventions with the inclusion of strong women characters, Oates effectively argues that "these texts present a reactionary fantasy of professional football" (45).

In the second chapter, Oates focuses on NFL draft discourses. He traces and contextualizes the trajectory of sports media coverage of the draft from relative obscurity for decades to its status as a widely anticipated and media-saturated event. He asserts that the systematic assessment and commodification of Black male bodies during the draft echoes the legacy of slavery—placing his analysis in conversation with William Rhoden's *Forty Million Dollar Slaves* and Anthony Prior's *The Slave Side of Sunday*. He compellingly configures the discursive and looking practices of the draft as a racialized homoerotic site of straight, white male visual pleasure: "The draft's ceremony of objectification may be read as a Black male pageant, judged by the white male gaze" (87).

The third and fourth chapters examine the NFL's place within the wider neoliberal push for the normalization of managerial, financialized thinking as a marker of masculine authenticity and personal development. Oates positions the publication of multiple self-help books authored by NFL coaches, including Bill Walsh, Tom Coughlin, Pete Carroll, and Tony Dungy, as demonstrative of the widespread acceptance of a corporate culture where managers and workers are encouraged to view an organization's goals as their own in pursuit of self-actualizing both ideal manhood and economic citizenship. The fourth

chapter powerfully illustrates the role fantasy football leagues and the popular videogame franchise *Madden NFL* play in prompting male fans to perceive themselves as managers of players—deepening the dominant conceptualization of NFL players as commodities. Effective management of players, although imagined for entertainment, serves to valorize the masculinity of these computer-based games' largely male participants.

Oates concludes with an assessment of the dominant narratives of the NFL concussion crisis, including the 2013 PBS *Frontline* documentary *League of Denial* and the 2015 film *Concussion*, starring Will Smith. He situates the concussion crisis as critically disrupting the NFL's hegemonic legitimation of white male anxieties in relation to their social position, its purveyance of neoliberal managerialism, and its relentless commodification of players.

Oates compellingly demonstrates the worthiness of the NFL as an urgent and productive site of scholarly inquiry within cultural studies. He appropriately historicizes and interweaves a wide array of media texts linking narratives of professional football to deeper cultural and political arenas of struggle. He also notes the tensions, contradictions, and elisions that are simultaneously present within this cogent set of discourses. Despite these strengths, Oates' analysis would have greatly benefitted from an engagement with the NFL's prominent circulation of prevailing logics of U.S. nationalism and militarism. From the NFL accepting money from the Department of Defense for its highly orchestrated pregame performances of the national anthem and military flyovers[1] to its "Salute to Service" public relations campaign paired with military camouflage merchandise, the league actively bolsters U.S. exceptionalism and military imperialism. Investigating the linkage between the glorification of militarism and hegemonic masculinity within the context of the NFL would have added an integral layer to Oates' examination. Building upon this line of reasoning, Oates work would be further complemented by an inspection of NFL media discourses originating from outside U.S. borders. The league annually hosts games in London and Mexico City, indicating its increasingly transnational reach.

Oates emphasizes that the NFL and its related popular media texts are not merely reflective of politics, but dynamic drivers of dominant perceptions of race, gender, and class. This claim has only been further buoyed by Colin Kaepernick and other African-American players' anthem-related acts of resistance. Given the increasing contingency of the NFL as a result of the concussion crisis, it seems more probable than ever that Oates' intersectional feminist vision of undermining the NFL's hegemony will be realized.

Notes

1. Melanie Schmitz, "How the NFL sold Patriotism to the U.S. Military for Millions." *ThinkProgress*, September 25, 2017. https://thinkprogress.org/nfl-dod-national-anthem-6f682cebc7cd/

Bio



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Shannon O'Sullivan is an Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at Green Mountain College. O'Sullivan earned her doctorate in Media Studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder in 2017. During her time at CU, she also completed graduate certificates in Comparative Ethnic Studies and Women and Gender Studies. Her interdisciplinary research interests focus

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Sofia Cutler, "Review of 'Radical Gotham: Anarchism in New York City from Schwab's Saloon to Occupy Wall Street', edited by Tom Goyens (University of Illinois Press)," *Lateral 7.1* (2018).

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Book Reviews
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Review of *Radical Gotham: Anarchism in New York City from Schwab's Saloon to Occupy Wall Street*, edited by Tom Goyens (University of Illinois Press)

Sofia Cutler

ABSTRACT Radical Gotham tracks anarchist life and politics in New York City over the last hundred and fifty years, giving a vivid window into an anarchist New York buzzing with saloons, assembly halls, and publishing houses. This anthology asserts anarchism's endurance as both an idea and a movement as it develops from the working-class, immigrant anarchist communities in the late 19th century into the New Left in the 1950s and 60s and finally the recent Occupy Wall Street protests.

Radical Gotham: Anarchism in New York City from Schwab's Saloon to Occupy Wall Street, edited by Tom Goyens Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017, 270 pp. (paperback) ISBN 978 0 252 08254 2. US List: $28.00.

Radical Gotham: Anarchism in New York City from Schwab's Saloon to Occupy Wall Street tracks anarchist life and politics in New York City over the last one hundred fifty years. The anthology of essays is a vivid window into an anarchist New York buzzing with saloons, assembly halls, and publishing houses. The city it presents feels utterly foreign from the corporatized and gentrified New York of today, but each of the anthology's eleven chapters adamantly resists any nostalgia. "Radical Gotham not only professes anarchism's distinctiveness," editor and contributor Tom Goyens maintains in his introduction, "but also demonstrates its *endurance* as a political and cultural ideology and movement in New York for nearly a century and half" (3, emphasis added). This anthology asserts anarchism's endurance as both an idea and a movement as it develops from working-class, immigrant anarchist communities in the late-nineteenth century into the New Left in the 1950s and 60s and finally the recent Occupy Wall Street protests.

What exactly is it that endures throughout these one hundred fifty years? Although anarchism is notoriously difficult to define, it can largely be characterized by the rejection of all power. Instead, anarchism abides by pre-figurative politics: the belief that "actions, methods, and organizations of revolutionaries should prefigure the kind of society that is desired" (6). In the words of New York Occupy, "Through consensual, non-hierarchical, and participatory self-governance, we are literally laying the framework for a new world by building it here and now—and it works" (17). This pre-figurative politics often defines itself against what it perceives as Marxism's more ends-oriented vision which, as anarchist theorist David Graeber argues, tries "to carve society into impossible shapes, killing millions in the process." [1]. Pre-figurative politics is process-oriented instead of ends-oriented, focusing on the resistance itself instead of some abstract vision of a future

utopian society. For Graeber, this focus on the journey rather than the destination is crucial because "You will never achieve the ends at all unless the means are themselves a model for the world you wish to create."[2]

This pre-figurative attempt to realize a better world in the here and now runs through every chapter of *Radical Gothem*. Space is a central preoccupation in this book, which describes in detail various anarchist struggles to carve out places of collective care and belonging in the capitalist landscape of New York. The first three chapters chronicle the earliest attempts to establish these spaces by working-class immigrants who transformed New York into an anarchist headquarters starting in the late-nineteenth century. Goyens' first chapter introduces us to Johann Most. This man with "a scraggly beard" and "oratorical fire" came to New York in 1882 and went on to radicalize many other working-class immigrants, including Emma Goldman and Saul Yanovsky. While some immigrants such as Most brought their politics over with them, many became radicalized after they moved to the United States and witnessed the startling inconsistency between the promises of milk and honey and the realities of hardship and exploitation. Kenyon Zimmer's chapter, "Saul Yanovsky and Yiddish Anarchism on the Lower East Side," outlines this brilliantly through his account of the Yiddish-speaking, Jewish anarchists living in the Lower East-side at the beginning of the twentieth century. If they weren't already radicalized by the pogroms or the perils of industrialization in Europe and Russia, many were when they faced the terrible labor conditions of the garment industry—where the majority of these Jewish immigrants found work. In response, they blended Yiddish culture and anarchist politics into a unique subculture that included mutual aid societies, Yiddish poetry presses, picnics, dinner parties, and Yom Kipper balls. In her chapter "Fired by the Ideal: Italian Anarchists in New York City, 1880s-1920s," Marcella Bencivenni shows how Italian immigrants also blended their anarchist politics with their own distinct Italian culture. Their subculture not only included festivals, orchestras, and newspapers, but violent insurrection and armed resistance. The Italians were some of the most militant of the immigrant anarchist communities in New York, and Bencivenni opens her chapter with the 1920 Wall Street bombing, which killed dozens and wounded hundreds in what was the worst attack in New York City until September 11th.

The working-class and immigrant character of these anarchist communities changed drastically after World War I, immigration restrictions, and the rise of the Red Scare. There was also increasing pressure on immigrant communities to reject radicalism for entrance into white American bourgeois respectability. We see the rise of a New Left in the 1960s, which was college educated and engaged in cultural critique and non-violence. But *Radical Gotham* does an excellent job contesting popular conceptions of a radical break in anarchist history by documenting how these later movements were profoundly influenced by the practices and theories of their early immigrant comrades.

These later movements remain committed to carving out autonomous spaces, including: the Living Theatre's attempts in the 1950s to alienate their audience from the existing social order and inspire them with a new way of living based on communal life and inner-transformation; the Motherfuckers countercultural affinity that strove to "survive, grow freaky, breathe, expand, love, struggle, and turn on" (167); Gordon Matta-Clarke's anarchitecture's confrontational critique of private property and the destruction of the commons as well as its creation of more egalitarian architecture; ABC No Rio's do-it-yourself center of music, art making, and queer life; and, finally, Occupy Wall Street's encampments in Zuccotti Park, which inspired hundreds of similar occupations around the world.

Although many of these movements have shut down as a result of the city's intensifying privatization, gentrification, and police presence, Goyens is adamant in asserting that they

are not failures: "Anarchism is and has been a distinct, resilient, transnational, and significant political philosophy and movement that deserves to be studied on its own turf" (20). This claim is directed not only at liberals but also Marxists whose philosophy about the creation of power through an anarchist state or party is the principal target of the book. Marxism certainly has much to learn from anarchism's attention to daily issues and its understanding of living space and culture as not secondary but central to an emancipatory project. But this book could learn from Marxism's more dialectical account of the relationship between spaces of freedom and domination. As David Harvey points out in his essay "Listen, Anarchist!" "The myth here is that there is some sort of absolute freedom that exists outside of some mechanisms of exclusion and even, sorry to say, domination. The dialectic of freedom and domination cannot be so easily set aside in human affairs."[3] As exemplified by Occupy Wall Street's brutal eviction from Zuccotti Park at the hands of the NYPD, anarchist spaces are not autonomous from the dominant order but always in relation to it. To ignore this reality, as Occupy did when it refused to engage with the state, is to sentence these anarchist spaces to endless evanescence.

Notes

1. David Graeber, *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm, 2004), 10.
2. David Graeber, "Occupy Wall Street's Anarchist Roots," *Al Jazeera*, November 30, 2011, http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/11/201111287283590450 8.html.
3. David Harvey, "Listen, Anarchist!" June 10, 2015, http://davidharvey.org/2015/06/listen-anarchist-by-david-harvey.

Bio

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Sofia Cutler is a recent graduate of McGill's master's program in cultural studies. Her work has been published in *Los Angeles Review of Books, Briarpatch, 3:AM Magazine*, and elsewhere. She has also curated an exhibition about the Montreal garment industry at the Museum of Jewish Montreal, which is set to open this spring. Her current work centers around urbanism in the United States and Brazil.

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